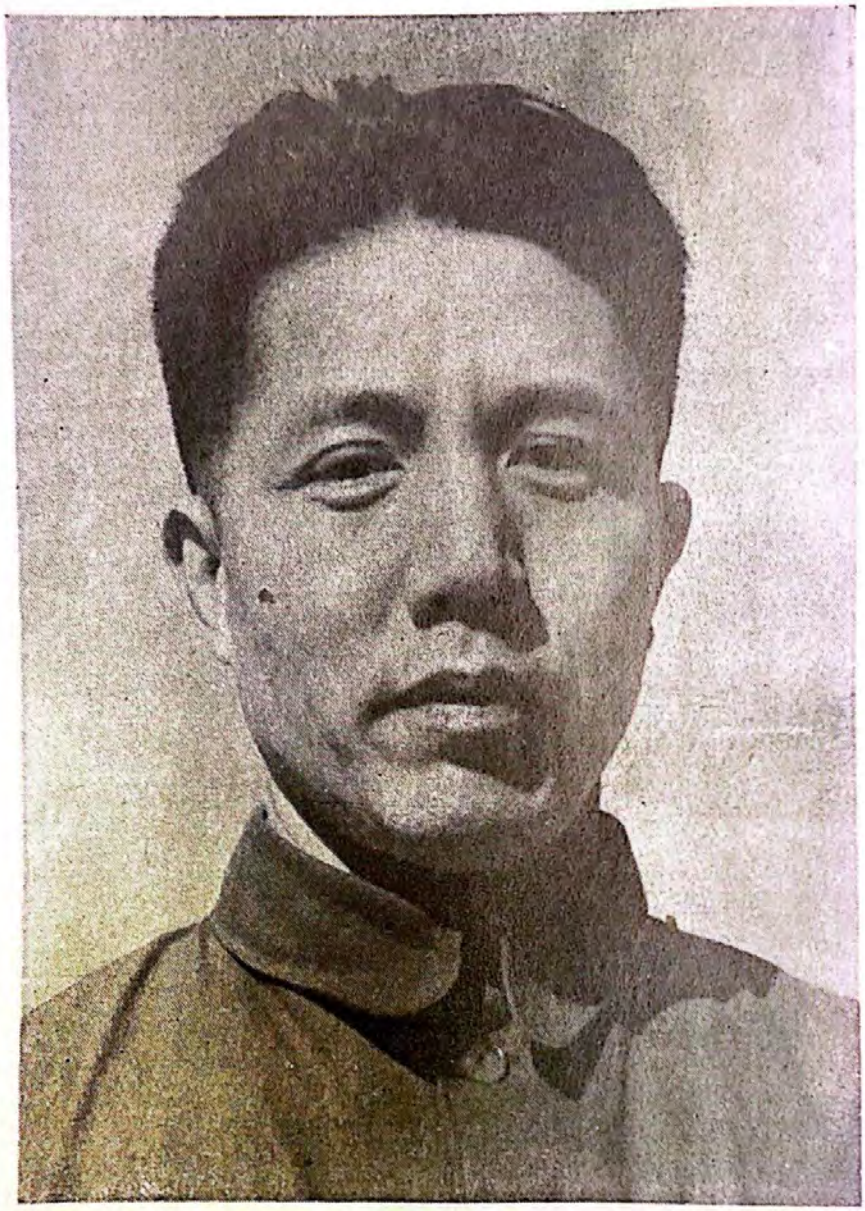
CHINA'S NEW LITERATURE AND ART

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ESSAYS AND ADDRESSES

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FOR MORE AND BETTER LITERARY AND ARTISTIC CREATIONS![1]

I

Four years have elapsed since the First All-China Conference of Writers and Artists was held in 1949. These four years have witnessed world-shaking changes such as our country never knew before. Thanks to the victory of the Chinese people's revolution, China has at last become a nation which the people can call their own; land reform and other democratic reforms have been successfully completed; the national economy has been restored and developed; and the Chinese people have defended their country and safeguarded world peace by resolute resistance to U.S. aggression and by aiding Korea. Our country has entered upon a new era, a period of large-scale, planned economic construction, and is now firmly and steadily launched upon the great task of socialist industrialization and socialist transformation.

The labouring people have become the masters of the country. With the improvement of their material

[1] A report delivered on September 24, 1953, at the Second All-China Conference of Writers and Artists held in Peking.

well-being, they are in need of a new spiritual life. It is the duty of our writers and artists to satisfy the ever-increasing cultural needs of the people by the creation of good, realistic works. They must imbue the people with a sense of the loftiness of patriotism and socialism so that the people will be able to advance towards the socialist society.

For the last four years, following the direction pointed out by Comrade Mao Tse-tung that literature and art should serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, our literature and art have made progress alongside of advances in the cause of the entire people.

The new literature and art of the people have in general superseded the old, backward and decadent literature and art of the bourgeoisie and the feudal class; they have gained a firm place among the masses and are steadily expanding their scope and influence. American films, with their reactionary and decadent ideas and vulgar taste, formerly dominated the motion picture market in our country; but they have long since been discarded by the Chinese people who now take great pride in the productions of our state-owned film studios and in the truly artistic films with rich ideological content produced in the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies. Traditional Chinese opera has undergone preliminary reforms both in content and production, and some excellent new operas have been created. Like the new plays and modern operas, these improved old-style operas are very popular with even larger audiences than ever before. New literary works, including translations from Soviet literature,

have a circulation ten to twenty times that of pre-liberation days. New picture story books, New Year pictures, new songs and dances are very popular. All the best works of our writers and artists have rapidly found their way to the people, and have become their common spiritual fare. At the same time, the people have been taking a keen part in creative work through various amateur activities and have in this way enriched our literature and art. All these factors have helped to improve and enrich the people's cultural life and strengthened their ties with literature and art.

Our writers and artists have endeavoured to portray workers, peasants and soldiers with their new characteristics and moral qualities. The victory of the Chinese revolution, the social reforms and widespread political education and ideological remoulding carried out among the people, have changed not only the social and economic conditions of our country, but the mental and moral attitudes of the people as well. The most important and most valuable results of our revolution are the heightened political consciousness and labour enthusiasm, and the growth of new moral qualities among our people. These are the things which our literature and art should primarily reflect.

Our writers are, of course, more familiar with the life and personalities of the period of revolutionary war in which they themselves took part for so many years. Works published during the past four years have given a rather realistic portrayal of some

of the heroes in the revolutionary civil wars and the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression; heroes who personified the people's unflinching will to struggle during those difficult years. Works of this nature include novels like *Wall of Bronze* by Liu Ching, *Prairie Fire* by Hsu Kuang-yao, *Living Hell* by Chen Teng-ko, *Flames Ahead* by Liu Pai-yu, *Flowers Spring Eternal* by Ma Chia; plays like *Matured in Battle* by Hu Ko, and films like *The White-haired Girl, Steeled Fighters, From Victory to Victory, The Shangjao Concentration Camp* and *Red Flag over Mount Tsui.* Our writers have also produced works depicting the great struggle of resistance to U.S. aggression and of aiding Korea. *Those Most to Be Loved,* the famous collection of reportage by Wei Wei, has received the warmest response from readers throughout the country. *Over a Vast Expanse of Three Thousand Li* by Yang Shuo, *Sangkumryung* (*Sangkum Ridge*) by Lu Chu-kuo and other short stories about the Korean war, though not without shortcomings, give a definitely truthful portrayal of the noble character and heroism of the Chinese People's Volunteers with their deep sense of patriotism and internationalism. In writings characterized by great depth of feeling, Pa Chin tells about the war in Korea and sings the praises of the heroes of our time.

Taking the labour enthusiasm of our industrial workers and the class struggle as their themes, our writers are attempting to depict the character of model workers and leading cadres in industry.

Endeavours of this kind include: The play *Face to Face with New Things,* collectively written by Tu Yin and others, *A Forty-Year-Old Dream,* another collective dramatic effort by Li Ching-sheng and others, and the novel *For a Happy Tomorrow* by Pai Land. *Spring Flowers and Autumn Fruit* by Lao Sheh (Lau Shaw), written after his play *Dragon Beard Ditch* on the clean-up of the slum area, depicts the great struggles which the working class waged against the illegal activities of the bourgeoisie. The theme of marriage and the questions confronting families today occupy a prominent place in works dealing with the new life in our rural areas. China's youth today has a completely new attitude towards marriage: Not only do all young people courageously seek freedom of choice in marriage; they also consciously place the public interest above their personal happiness. The emancipation of women is inseparably linked with the reform of society as a whole; the fine qualities, spirit of independence and courage of China's women are nurtured and tempered in today's acute social struggle. Many literary and dramatic works reflect these traits with great skill.

The glory of our great motherland and the people's struggle in defence of world peace have been forcefully and vividly described in many works of poetry, music and the fine arts.

A phenomenon in literature and art which deserves special mention is the continued appearance of new writers from among the workers and peasants.

One of these is Kao Yu-pao,[2] now nationally known. At the same time, many writers from the national minorities have also come to the fore. In the spirit of fraternal love prevailing among China's many nationalities, these writers truly depict their past and present life, and the progressive elements among their own people. Such works mark a new era in the literary development of China's national minorities.

While encouraging new literary and artistic creation, we have reformed and developed the various forms of national art which still survive among our people, so that all that is best in our literary and artistic heritage may be fully utilized by the people in developing their new cultural life. The development of our new literature and art is impossible if alienated from our national traditions; only after the critical assimilation of what is best in our heritage can the new literature and art really become the people's own. On the other hand, this heritage can meet the needs of the people only after it has been re-assessed and evaluated from our new ideological standpoint. The people treasure their national opera. But with their heightened political and cultural levels as well as power of appreciation, they can no longer put up with the passive and often anti-social attitudes expressed in the old opera; they can no longer tolerate either ugly and slanderous caricatures

2 Kao Yu-pao (1927-), born into a poor peasant family, is now a fighter of the People's Liberation Army. He wrote his autobiographical novel *Kao Yu-pao* while his knowledge of characters was elementary.

of the labouring people, or obscenity and vulgarity. They demand reforms in the opera. The masses have given a most enthusiastic reception to such reformed and improved operas as *Liang Shan-po and Chu Ying-tai,*[3] *Reconciliation Between the General and the Prime Minister,*[4] and many others. In portraying present-day life, local operas have also had great successes. In the reform of Chinese opera we have criticized both the slapdash approach of some to our cultural heritage and the hidebound conservativism of others who do not want any improvements.

Many actors have made their contributions to

3*Liang Shan-po and Chu Ying-tai* is one of the oldest tales of China. Chu Ying-tai, a brave, clever and warm-hearted girl. disguises herself as a boy and goes to study in a school. There, she falls in love with Liang Shan-po, an honest, gentle and sentimental young man, who never suspects that she is a girl. When he finds out the truth, it is already too late . . . her father has betrothed her to a local despot. Liang dies broken-hearted. Chu throws herself on his grave, the tomb bursts open and swallows her up. Two beautiful butterflies appear suddenly—obviously the two lovers transformed—fluttering side by side in the sunshine.

4*Reconciliation Between the General and the Prime Minister* is a Peking opera, based on an anecdote of the Warring States Period (403-221 B.C.) about a quarrel between the famed general Lien Po and the prime minister Lin Hsiang-ju of the state of Chao and their reconciliation when the general apologized to the prime minister.

The story begins with Lin Hsiang-ju's promotion to the post of prime minister of the state of Chao because of his outstanding service. Lien Po, the general who was envious of his position, repeatedly tried to humiliate him. Lin Hsiang-ju, however, patiently avoided any conflict with Lien Po, knowing that their co-operation was a sure guarantee against foreign invasion. After being persuaded by others, Lien Po came to realize his mistakes. He went to Lin and asked his forgiveness, and the two became reconciled.

the improvement of our national opera and theatrical arts. Their patriotism and creative energy have been greatly heightened by the respect shown them by the Government and people in the new society; by the deep inspiration gained from contact with the workers, peasants and soldiers in their audiences; and by all that they learn by taking part in the various social and political activities. Some of those responsible for opera reform, however, fail to see the progress made by the artistes, and consequently fail to rely on the latter's creativeness and enthusiasm. Instead of respecting the skill and experience of these artistes, they rely solely on their own enthusiasm and administrative orders to get things done. This high-handed attitude has done considerable damage to opera reform.

The National Festival of Classical and Folk Drama and the All-China Festival of Folk Music and Dances, held in October 1952 and April 1953 respectively, have given a great impetus to the improvement and development of our national opera, music and dances. Folk music and dances, including those of the national minorities, now provide an extremely rich source for new creations in these fields. The correct path of development lies in the extensive collection and adaptation of folk music and dances. New works, created out of sheer fantasy, which have no popular basis will not be welcomed by the people.

New Year pictures and picture story books are very well liked by the people because these popular forms are gradually and more suitably adapted to

the new contents. But we have not yet paid enough attention to our national heritage in painting, sculpture and architecture, nor have we made a systematic study of these arts. Our painters are now searching for ways and means of improving and developing the forms of classical Chinese painting, to make it serve the new tasks of artistic creation. This is an absolute necessity. Failing this, there can be no further development of the fine traditions of our national art of painting. Obviously, what the people want to see in paintings are the men and women of today, instead of the gentry of the past in their ancient costumes. The people want to see the beautiful flowers, insects and birds, mountains and rivers, which they see in their daily lives; they do not appreciate pictures of hermits leading secluded lives far from the haunts of men. Artists who do not wish to lag behind the times must understand and make efforts to meet the needs and tastes of the people.

Generally speaking, there is a dearth of new creations in literature and art. The people feel that there are too few new works, especially films and plays. They have every right to demand more and better works than they are at present offered by our writers and artists. Because of the rapid rise in the people's political and cultural levels, and in their requirements and taste, they demand not only that we produce literary and artistic works, but also that these products be of a high enough level to meet their needs. The young people feel most keenly that our creations lack the inspiring and educational force of

Soviet works. Life in our country is full and rich, and tremendous changes are taking place all around us; but life as depicted in our works is frequently drab and monotonous. Many heroes of a new type, with the noblest qualities and complete loyalty to the cause of our country and people, have appeared, but very few living pictures of such heroes are to be found in our works. Yet our people are waiting eagerly for portraits of heroes after whom they can model themselves.

It is an undeniable fact that literature and art still lag far behind the achievements and needs of our country and people.

In retrospect, it becomes evident that the development of literature and art over the past four years was not all plain sailing but beset with serious ideological struggles. As forms of social ideology, literature and art necessarily reflect the different interests and ideology of different classes. Though the buorgeoisie of our country has not made any contributions to, nor does it occupy any position in, our literature and art, this does not mean that our literature and art are not constantly in danger of being influenced by bourgeois ideology; particularly at present, when the working class is co-operating with the bourgeoisie, we should be more vigilantly aware of the danger of such influence.

When the War of Liberation was nearing its successful conclusion, that is, just before we entered the cities from the countryside, some of our writers and artists began doubting whether the literature and art

evolved in the liberated areas would be welcome in the cities. Such doubts really amounted to a wavering from the policy that literature and art should serve the workers, peasants and soldiers. History has proved such doubts wrong. The literature and art of the liberated areas, reflecting the new era of the people, immediately received a warm welcome from the workers, the labouring people and progressive intellectuals in the cities. We also heard at that time comments to the effect that the literature and art of the liberated areas were "the literature and art of the peasants," lacking in the "human touch" and in "interest." Those who made such comments were actually looking down upon literature and art serving the workers, peasants and soldiers. Such comments do not in any way represent the opinion of the people.

Our literature and art must give expression to the thoughts and emotions of the workers, peasants and soldiers, especially to the thoughts and emotions of the advanced elements among these. That is to say, we must stress their resolute fighting will, their selfless labour enthusiasm, their unbounded loyalty to the well-being of the collective whole, to the welfare of the country and of the nation, so as to inculcate in the people new virtues and moral qualities which will help them push history forward. The literature and art of the bourgeoisie are diametrically opposed to such a goal; they invariably express only their own bourgeois world, in that they propagate individualism, the worship of individuals and self-admiration; all they do is to inculcate indifference to the fate of the

country and of the people, and aversion to mass struggles. Thus they do their utmost to keep the old ideologies, habits and prejudices of the people intact and to pull history backwards. The film *The Life of Wu Hsun*[5] was extremely harmful, because it subtly advocated an ideology of submission to the reactionary feudalistic rule and tried to spread the bourgeois doctrine of reformism and individualism. The stoicism which the film extolled was only an abnormal and disguised form of individualism. This film did nothing else but put these pernicious ideas into an artistic garb, thereby confusing many writers and artists, even certain Communist Party members among the writers and artists, as well as the general audience. Herein lies the seriousness of the damage which this film did. The timely criticism on *The Life of Wu Hsun,* initiated by the Central Committee of the Communist Party and Chairman Mao Tse-tung in 1951, dealt a telling blow to the encroachment by bourgeois ideology on literature and art; at the same time, it gave an unforgettable lesson to our writers and artists, especially those who are Party members.

[5]The film *The Life of Wu Hsun* tells the story of a beggar who lived in Shantung Province from 1838 to 1896 during the Ching dynasty and who founded schools with the money he had begged.

Wu Hsun disguised his political physiognomy under the banner of "promoting education" as a beggar. Encouraged and supported by local despots and bad gentry, landlords and officials, he founded so-called charity schools and became a landlord and usurer himself. The film obscured the real Wu Hsun by describing him as a revolutionary and a national hero. This was really falsification of historical facts in artistic garb.

This critical discussion and the campaign which followed for the rectification of erroneous views among writers and artists; together with their active participation in the *san fan* and *wu fan* movements which aimed at combating the corrosive influence of bourgeois ideology and unlawful acts by the bourgeoisie; all helped our artists and writers to draw a clear demarcation line between working-class ideology and bourgeois ideology. The criticism levelled at *The Life of Wu Hsun* was a great victory for the working class on the ideological front. The leading position of working-class ideology in literature and art was thereby further confirmed.

In the wake of the campaign for the rectification of erroneous views among writers and artists, many have felt the urge to go into factories, into the villages and to the Korean front to observe life from close quarters. Thus broad vistas have been opened for greater integration of literary and artistic creations with the struggles of the masses.

On the literary and art front, we must continue to criticize and rectify all expressions of bourgeois ideology. For instance, the blind worship of Western bourgeois culture and contempt for our own national tradition is one typical manifestation of bourgeois thinking. Such ideas must be severely criticized. Our struggle against bourgeois ideology is a long-range task. At the same time, we must oppose abstract generalization, formulism (writing according to set formulae) and other anti-realistic tendencies in works of literature and art. Unless we overcome

such deviations, our literature and art will not be able to make any progress. The struggle for realism in literature and art is another one of our long-range tasks.

Our works of literature and art are in the main realistic, mirroring the life and struggles of the workers, peasants and soldiers who make history, as well as reflecting urgent problems in our life. Our writers are strictly observing the principle that literature and art should serve present-day political tasks. Many works have, therefore, been of positive educational value to the people and have played an important part in their struggles and in the nation's construction. This basically realistic tendency in our literature and art should not be ignored or denied.

However, our literary works have not yet been able to synthetize or generalize artistically the rich experiences accumulated by the Chinese people in their long struggles in different fields. Our writers have not been able to create typical, outstanding, positive characters. Many works suffer from the defects of abstract generalization or writing according to cold formulae. In this the inadequacy of realism in our literature and art is shown. A serious defect lies in the subjective method of creation. Some writers take generalities, instead of life itself, as the point of departure for their writings, generalities derived for the most part from policies, directives and resolutions in cold print. These writers have not obtained perception through personal experience, through observation and study of the people, but are

making their subjective perception the source of their inspiration and the basis for their creations. They describe life not according to the laws of development of life as it really is, but subjectively and according to preconceived formulae.

The great majority of our writers, however, are not consciously subjective in their works. They have lived among the masses and participated in their struggles, and are eager to portray life as it is. Still, they do not have a thorough and comprehensive understanding of life. Some writers, especially the young ones, have not yet mastered the technique of writing and the realistic, creative method of depicting life. These are the main and most common causes of abstract generalization and formulism in our literature and art. The key to overcoming these deviations is in raising the writers' ability to understand and describe life. Many writers have now established closer contact with the masses. They realize that true and close ties with the people can only be established through participation in the people's struggles, productive activities and work. They have also come to realize that life must be observed, appraised and studied from the Marxist-Leninist standpoint, as well as from a standpoint based on Communist Party and Government policies, in order not to let themselves be engulfed by the complexities of human life.

The difficulty in overcoming deviations like abstract generalization and formulism is sometimes due

to oversimplification and vulgarization of the principle that art should be subordinated to politics.

The fundamental difference between literature and art on the one hand, and other forms of expressing ideas on the other, is that literature and art use images to express thought; without images there can be no art, and images can only be taken from life. Some of our leading personnel in literature and art and many of our writers fail sometimes to understand this basic characteristic of literature and art. They divorce themselves from the reality of artistic images and vainly pursue abstract political ideas instead. They do not aim at creating in their writings typical characters with vitality and personality, but are satisfied with the creation of characters that are mere mouthpieces of certain ideas. The result is that their characters are not real human beings acting and growing naturally and rationally in a definite environment, but simply puppets at the mercy of the writer's pen. The ideas of these writers are not fused and blended into the artistic form of their work, but abstract notions superimposed on it. They seem to bring in human characters merely to explain the different policies; they make no attempt to win and move the reader through the creation of characters endowed with noble qualities, ideas and emotions. Marx and Engels reminded writers that Shakespeare should not be forgotten for Schiller, and that the realistic should not be overlooked because of ideological elements. Lenin and Stalin stressed more than once that writers must be faithful to life. In his *Talks at the Yenan*

Forum on Literature and Art,[6] Comrade Mao Tse-tung also put particular stress on the need for writers to observe, understand and study thoroughly the life of the people, and on the need for the political content to be in complete accord with reality in literature and art.

Literature and art should, of course, express the policies of the Party. To be independent of Party and Government policies means departure from their leadership. Policies are drawn up according to the objective laws of social development, reflecting and representing in concentrated form the fundamental interests of the people. In observing and describing life, our writers must be guided by Party and Government policies. They must appraise social phenomena from the standpoint of Party and Government policies, and also give expression to the great influence these policies have on the lives of the people as a whole.

The implementation of our policies always depends on the masses and Government workers. Once our policies are grasped by the millions upon millions of people, these policies instantly change and guide the people's lives with irresistible force, become the

[6]The Yenan Forum on Literature and Art was a meeting of writers and artists, called together by Comrade Mao Tse-tung in Yenan in May 1942. He pointed out to the meeting that literature and art should serve the workers, peasants and soldiers. His talks at this Forum, which expounded and developed the Marxist-Leninist theory on literature and art, have become the guiding principle for China's progressive writers and artists. The Yenan Forum thus marked a turning point in the history of China's movement for a new literature and art.

decisive factor in determining destiny of the nation and its entire people. To mirror policies through artistic creations means, therefore, fundamentally mirroring the close kinship between the Communist Party and the people, mirroring the leadership given to the people by the Party, mirroring the struggle between advanced and backward elements among the people, mirroring the exemplary role played by Party members as vanguards of the people, as well as the superiority of the people's democratic system. Therefore, the correct reflection of policy and the faithful portrayal of life should be thoroughly integrated. Faithfulness in describing life is the highest principle of realistic art.

Literature and art must portray personalities, their thoughts and emotions. Only through personalities can the class struggle and productive activities be reflected. However, some works dealing with production do not really concern themselves with labour, the militant and creative spirit of the workers, but describe mechanically technical processes, various working methods, and even the movements of machines (*e.g.*, in some dances). This not only runs counter to the requirements of art; it also expresses a lack of political content.

Generally speaking, our new literature and art are still young and in the process of maturing. They face many difficulties. The main task of our leadership in literature and art should be to try by all possible means to ensure our new literature and art of a healthy growth, support every new development, and

at the same time help them patiently to overcome all their shortcomings and difficulties. Our new and youthful literature and art are in great need of correct, concrete and careful leadership.

Now let us examine the actual condition of our leadership in literature and art. There is no denying that conditions are far from satisfactory. Here lies a serious cause for the backwardness of present-day literature and art.

In his famous article "Party Organization and Party Literature," written in 1905, Lenin pointed out that literature must become part and parcel of the organized and planned work of the Social-Democratic Party, indissolubly linked with the other branches of the Party's work. At the same time he pointed out that literature cannot be mechanically integrated with other branches of Party work, that "Literature yields the least to mechanical integration, to levelling, to the rule of the majority over the minority," and that "in this case it is absolutely necessary to ensure a larger scope for personal initiative, individual inclination, to give a wider sweep to thought and fantasy, form and content." That is to say, literary and artistic activity fall within the province of Party and Government leadership. This is a firm and unalterable principle. But the leadership, on the other hand, must also be fully aware of the characteristics inherent in literary and artistic activity.

In our work we frequently violate this principle of Lenin's. We fail to regard literature and art as a branch of Party work, indissolubly linked with the

other branches. We have not helped writers to study Party and Government policies intensively, nor to participate actively in the actual struggles of the masses. The result is that our literature and art often become divorced from politics and reality. Also, we often fail to take into account the laws governing literary or artistic creation, and do not show enough consideration in giving leadership to our writers and artists.

Our general custom has been to use simple, administrative methods to guide writers and artists in their creative work, because we are not adept in using social methods. In assigning tasks of creative writing, the leadership often fails to take into consideration the writers' different experience and skill, setting them a subject, fixing a time for its completion and sometimes even dictating the form to be used as if they were school children. But when the work is done, it is often turned down in the most casual and off-hand manner. Whether a work succeeds or fails is not considered important. The result is that the reasons for success or failure are seldom carefully studied, nor is the experience gained summed up as concrete help to the writers. Such administrative direction of creative writing is an example of leadership devoid of ideological and political content, which fosters the growth of deviations like abstract generalization and formulism. It is better to use social methods to promote literary and artistic creation. We must rely more on the associations of writers and artists to organize creative work; we must encourage

more frequent emulation and correct criticism and self-criticism among writers and artists, and must also mobilize public opinion so as to promote and guide creative writing along the right path. Only thus can an atmosphere favourable to the development of creative writing be created; only thus can conditions favourable to artistic creation be brought about. These are things we have neglected in the past. Of course, such measures will not mean weakening the leadership given by the Party and Government to literature and art. They are, on the contrary, designed to strengthen that leadership.

Literary criticism is one of the most important means of promoting and guiding literary and artistic creation. Ever since the criticism of the film *The Life of Wu Hsun,* we have levelled severe criticisms against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideas in our literature and art and against the slipshod or irresponsible manner in creative writing. Such criticism is absolutely necessary. Without it, our literature and art will come to a standstill or go astray. In the past two or three years, our literary criticism has obtained good results. But some writers and artists fear and loathe criticism. This is an unhealthy attitude. There are, however, some deviations in our criticism which must be corrected.

First and foremost, there is the attitude taken by the critics. Some of them have not clearly distinguished between works with completely anti-democratic tendencies and works which, despite certain shortcomings and even mistakes, are basically progressive.

They have not distinguished between works which consciously distort life and works which fail to portray life truly because of the writers' failure to understand life and master the technique of expression. These critics have exposed the defects of all writers indiscriminately and subjected them to severe attack. Undoubtedly, all shortcomings or mistakes must be criticized, but if a work is not against the people, we should first affirm what is correct in it before criticizing its shortcomings. We must also show writers the way to correct their defects. Critics often fail to show the comradely concern which they should have for writers; they do not correctly combine severe criticism with warm encouragement, or exacting demands on the writers with concern for their future works. Generally speaking, there has been too much disparagement and too little help.

Next comes the method of criticism. Very frequently, criticism is unrealistic, because it is based on doctrinaire formulae. Critics often point out mistakes in an arbitrary way and in general terms, but seldom show what is the right thing to do. Many critics have even less basic knowledge and understanding of life than the writers, at the same time lacking the ability to make a detailed artistic analysis of different works.

Rash and arbitrary criticism in the press which is conducive to prejudices among some readers and the lack of concern and support for creative work in literature and art shown by the leadership discourage and depress many of our writers and artists. Steps

should be taken to change this state of affairs. Our criticism must help to encourage the creative enthusiasm of writers and artists, and to call forth all their latent powers, instead of doing the opposite. Our writers, for their part, must have the courage and the forbearance to listen to criticism, even to incorrect criticism. They should also, as writers, initiate criticism voluntarily. Like all creative work, our literary criticism is in its youth and needs support and help. It is obvious that there must be for more criticism than there is at present, and not less. To rectify deviations in literary criticism and to develop correct criticism which will be helpful in creative work is the common tasks of both writers and critics.

The mistakes and shortcomings in our literature and art mentioned above are bound up with the working methods of the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists and of the various associations of writers, dramatists, musicians and artists.[7] During the past four years, these organs have slackened or even abandoned their leadership in creative work and criticism in literature and art. They have not shown enough concern for the creative activities and the studies of writers and artists. They have not held serious discussions on creative works, nor have they maintained regular contact with writers and artists, either ideologically or in connection with the latter's

[7]The All-China Federation of Writers and Artists, and the associations of writers, dramatists, musicians and artists, respectively, all came into being after the All-China Conference of Writers and Artists in 1949.

creative work. The All-China Federation of Writers and Artists has not sufficiently supervised and guided the various associations, nor has it maintained the contact it should with the various local writers' and artists' federations. As a result, it has become an organ lacking life and vitality, estranged from the masses as well as from the writers and artists. Such an anomalous situation should be severely criticized and at once corrected.

II

During this Conference, we shall discuss our present-day tasks of organization and creation in literature and art. Comrade Mao Tse-tung pointed out in 1942 in his *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art* that working class writers should master the creative method of socialist realism. It is actually in this direction that the new literary and art movement,[8] started on May 4, 1919, has been progressing.

[8] On May 4, 1919, students in Peking held a huge demonstration, the first of its kind, protesting against the imperialist powers' Peace Treaty of Versailles. Its effect was immediate, spreading to all parts of the country and the protest developed into a great, nation-wide, patriotic movement against imperialism and feudalism. The cultural revolution against the feudal culture, carried forward under the banner of the May Fourth Movement, had a twofold meaning: One was to replace the old morality with a new morality; the other was to replace the old literature with a new literature. The May Fourth Movement was the procreator of the New-Democratic culture which has communism as its guiding spirit.

Its brilliant standard-bearer was Lu Hsun,[9] who was a great revolutionary realist and became in his later creative activities a great pioneer and exponent of socialist realism. Our distinguished writers Kuo Mo-jo and Mao Tun both are veteran fighters in the new literary and art movement across the thirty years. They have contributed much towards the creation of China's revolutionary literature and art. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has a very high opinion of the achievements made by this new movement in literature and art, of which Lu Hsun was the great champion. Since Comrade Mao Tse-tung's *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art,* our realistic literature and art have developed further and made tremendous achievements, guided by Mao Tse-tung's teachings and based on the revolutionary traditions of the May Fourth Movement. Outstanding examples are the Stalin prize winners: *The Sun Shines over the Sangkan River,*[10] *The White-haired Girl,*[11] and *Hurricane.*[12]

9Lu Hsun (pseudonym of Chou Shu-jen; 1881-1936) was the father of modern Chinese literature and the greatest and most militant standard-bearer of China's cultural revolution. Aside from *The True Story of Ah Q,* in which he created a character that will live in world literature, he wrote many short stories and essays. Among the works he translated are Gogol's *Dead Souls* and Fadeyev's *The Nineteen.* Lu Hsun was also the author of *An Outline History of the Chinese Novel.*

10*The Sun Shines over the Sangkan River,* by the woman writer Ting Ling, is a novel about the struggles of the peasants against the landlords during the land reform in North China. It won a Stalin Prize for Literature in 1951.

11*The White-haired Girl* is a new type of opera, written by Ho Ching-chih and Ting Yi. It was awarded a Stalin Prize

At present our country is undergoing a steady process of socialist transformation on an ever-expanding scale. The socialist elements are rapidly growing day by day and playing an increasingly decisive role in the life of the people. Powerful state-owned enterprises of a socialist nature have assumed the leading position in the national economy. The Communist Party, as the leader of China's state power, enjoys the highest prestige among the people. Marxism-Leninism and Comrade Mao Tse-tung's teachings on the Chinese revolution are being widely disseminated among the people throughout the country. All these factors provide a firm and broadening basis for the development of a socialist-realist literature and art; the need, therefore, to learn and to master the method of socialist realism has even greater significance and urgency. If a writer makes no effort to familiarize himself with the people's new life or to educate them in the spirit of socialism and

for Literature in 1951. The story is about the tragic life of a peasant girl before the liberation. It tells of Hsi-erh, the daughter of a poor tenant who is forced to sell her to the landlord and takes poison in his grief. Hsi-erh, violated by the landlord and abused by his mother, manages to flee from the manor and hides in a mountain cave, subsisting on wild herbs and what she can steal from offerings at the local shrine. Her hair turns white, but her hope of revenge is fanned by her desire to live. The Eighth Route Army liberates her when they liberate the village. The landlord gets his due, after the villagers have voiced their grievances, climaxed by Hsi-erh's accusation.

[12]The novel *Hurricane* by Chou Li-po describes the peasants' struggle in the land reform in Northeast China. It won a Stalin Prize for Literature in 1951.

help them advance, he will have no use for the people and lag behind the times.

Socialist realism is no mystery nor something unattainable; all writers and artists eager to progress and willing to learn can reach that goal. The important thing is to study and learn. There is no short cut. But at present we have one special condition in our favour: The Soviet Union's great achievements in the literature and art of socialist realism give us the best examples to follow. Of course, our study should be a creative one and not merely imitative.

At present, our writers and artists still have different ways of thinking and different artistic viewpoints. Many have not yet adopted a proletarian socialist standpoint although they desire to take such a stand and want to advance towards socialism together with the working people of China. Literature and art comprise a broad field in social life; they also constitute an important ideological front. On this front we must first of all draw a line of distinction between those who are for the people and those who are against them. We should unite all writers and artists who stand on the people's side and welcome all works of literature and art beneficial to the people. We should uphold the method of socialist realism as our highest principle in the creation and criticism of literature and art. Working class writers should strive to improve their works up to the level required by socialist realism; at the same time, they should give active and patient assistance to all

patriotic writers who wish to progress along this same path.

In this respect, impatience and sectarianism are both harmful. Different writers and artists arrive at socialist realism each according to his own experience in life and individual way of creation. A writer must make great efforts in order to become a genuine, fully matured socialist realist. Inseparably linked with the Party, the nation and every aspect of the people's cause as a whole, our literature and art must cover a broad field and all phases of life, as well as use a variety of artistic forms. We encourage free competition between different artistic forms. Socialist realism does not in any respect limit the writer's freedom in the selection of a theme, form of expression or individual style. On the contrary, socialist realism ensures this freedom to the fullest extent, so as to develop the writer's creative spirit and initiative. Comrade Mao Tse-tung's statement, "let all flowers bloom in their full glory," made in his directive on dramatic activities, should also be the principle guiding the development of literature and art. We need portrait-painting as well as landscapes; military marches no less than lyric songs; and we need comparatively advanced and complex artistic forms as well as a great number of simple forms. Of course, socialist realism is applicable to all works of literature and art. But when we make demands on a particular writer or work, we should take into account differences in ideological and artistic tendencies and the degree of maturity of the writer, as well

as the special features and characteristics in the development of the various artistic forms.

Anyone who attempts to make of the methods of socialist realism a dead set of rules for artistic creation, using his own subjective yardstick to measure all works of art, is in fact violating the spirit of socialist realism.

Socialist realism should be a dynamic force guiding and inspiring the advance of writers and artists. It repuires our writers to familiarize themselves with the new life of the people, portray the advanced characters among them, and reflect their new thoughts and emotions.

In his report to the Nineteenth Party Congress on the Work of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. (B.), G. Malenkov pointed out: "The vitality and importance of realistic art lies in that it can, and must, discover and bring to light the lofty spiritual qualities and typical positive features in the character of the ordinary man and woman, and create vivid artistic images of them, images that will be an example to others."[13]

In his *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art,* Comrade Mao Tse-tung put special emphasis on the point that our literature and art should portray positive characters and the positive side of life. He said:

13 *Report to the 19th Party Congress on the Work of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U.* (B.), Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1952, p.98.

Soviet literature, during the period of socialist reconstruction, portrays mainly the bright side. It also describes shortcomings in their work and villainous characters, but such descriptions serve to give relief to the brightness of the whole picture; they are not there on a "fifty-fifty basis."

In these talks, Comrade Mao Tse-tung called on the writers in the revolutionary bases to write about "the new people and the new world" and to produce works like A. Fadeyev's *The Nineteen.*

In his criticism of the film *The Life of Wu Hsun,* Comrade Mao Tse-tung made this further sharp and clear comment:

In the eyes of many writers, history develops not through the replacement of the old by the new, but through the efforts to preserve the old and prevent it from dying; not through class struggles to overthrow the reactionary feudal rulers who should be overthrown but, as exemplified by Wu Hsun, through denial of the class struggle of the oppressed people and surrender to the reactionary feudal rulers. Our writers do not exert themselves to learn who are the enemies that oppressed the Chinese people in the past; and whether those who capitulated to these enemies and even served them are worthy of praise. Nor do our writers study and learn what new social-economic forms, new class forces, new personalities and new ideas

have arisen in China—in conflict with the old social-economic forms and their superstructure (political, cultural, etc.)—in the one hundred and more years since the Opium War of 1840; and decide accordingly what should be praised and extolled, and what should not be praised or extolled, but opposed.

Here the central and most important task of literary and artistic creation is defined: to portray new people and their new ideas, and at the same time to oppose the enemies of the people and every manifestation of backwardness among the people.

Our country and our society are at present undergoing a great transformation. We should realize that the depraved ideas and customs of the old society had a tenacious hold on the people, but, tempered by a long period of revolutionary struggle, the people are rapidly freeing themselves from this influence. The younger generation, especially, is the least affected by the influence of the past. More and more new people are appearing in real life. The greatest task of our writers and artists is to portray characters of a completely new type, characters who do not tolerate the evil influences of the old society. Thus, not only the people of today should be described, but also the perspective given of the future. Only thus can works of literature and art cultivate new qualities in the people and help them advance.

Literary works should create positive, heroic characters because we want to hold them up as

examples to the people and because we want progressive vitality to struggle against all that is reactionary and backward and obstructs the advance of society. We should not separate the task of portraying positive characters from the task of exposing negative manifestations. Moreover, we must show that the backward and reactionary will be overwhelmed by the invincible, new forces. Therefore, in our works, we should not put negative characters on the same footing with positive characters. We can and should describe the process of remoulding a backward character, but this must not be taken as a typical process in the making of a hero. Should we write about the shortcomings of our heroes? To pose the question in this general way is inappropriate. Heroes can only be discovered among living people; we cannot let them spring from our imaginations. Is it not strange, then, that a writer who does not know any heroes or understand what they are like should start by looking for their faults? Of course, we should not idolize our heroes or write of them in set formulae.

In real life, many characteristics which are determined by society are common to the heroes, typical of the people; yet every hero has his own individuality, they all develop differently. The qualities they have in common are incessantly tempered in the fire of revolutionary struggles and in their struggles to overcome difficulties. Here defects in a person's political and moral character must be sharply distinguished from passing phases in his political and ideological development. The lofty and shining personality of a

hero manifests itself mainly in his absolute refusal to compromise with the enemy and all that is backward, in his boundless loyalty to, and faith in, the people; this manifestation of the moral strength of an advanced class is the reason why our heroes have a place in the hearts of millions and tens of millions of people and are held up as examples to all. A hero is not necessarily perfect in all respects; he is not without shortcomings. But his superior moral calibre is expressed in the uncompromising attitude he adopts towards his own mistakes, and in his courage to accept the criticism of others and to criticize himself. Of course, this does not mean that a writer must always describe the shortcomings of his heroes: unimportant defects of a hero definitely can and should be ignored. If a person has moral or political defects which are completely incompatible with a hero—if, for instance, he is hypocritical, selfish or wavers in the revolutionary cause—then he is no hero at all. For in what way does such a man deserve to be praised or sung? However, it is permissible, and sometimes necessary, for a writer purposely to ignore unimportant shortcomings of the hero he writes about, so that he can bring out in salient relief the hero's shining qualities and portray him as an ideal personality that all can admire. Our realists must, at the same time, be revolutionaries with an ideal.

It is not easy to understand and describe new things and events. The writer must, first and foremost, stand in the ranks of the most advanced people and struggle together with them against the old in

support of the new. He must not place himself outside this struggle nor adopt the neutral attitude of an observer. He must be resolute in striving for the victory of the new; he must be sensitive to it and love it deeply. At the same time, he must refuse to compromise, however slightly, with what is old and retrogressive. He should look for the things that represent the progressive and positive forces among the people, not just because he is looking for an "ideal" hero for his work, but precisely because he wants to eradicate all retrogressive manifestations and so push society forward. It is impossible to portray progressive characters divorced from the contradictions and struggles between the old and the new in the present society. The personality, temperament and qualities of a character can be fully expressed only in the context of a severe conflict; on the other hand, the complex and sharp social, political, and ideological contradictions of the times can be brought out vividly and in focus only through personalities and their interrelationships. Since the heroes in many of our literary works are portrayed in isolation from social life, it is not possible to detect their background and environment, or the inseparable tie between their destiny and that of the whole country. Very often, virtually no development or growth is seen in the characters from the beginning to the end of a story. This is the most common flaw in works presenting new heroic characters. The chief cause for this is that many of our writers have not yet plunged into the actual struggle of the masses, have not observed or

analysed with care the personality and psychology of the various classes and different types of people.

To portray the advanced people of our times, the writer must stand in the forefront of the struggles of our era.

Our writers can, of course, describe historical figures; but it is necessary to depict them from our new viewpoint. We look for historical themes not because we have nothing better to do, nor because we wish to escape from modern life. In literary works on historical themes, only those who were on the side of progress, whose examples can inspire and educate the people today should be depicted and praised; such people, for instance, as the leaders of peasant uprisings, national heroes who gave their lives struggling for the country's independence and unity, and great scientists and artists who by their creative work contributed to the welfare of the people. It was these great predecessors of ours who by their efforts hastened the coming of the people's final liberation. They were the progressive people down the ages. We must neither idolize nor deprecate historical characters; history admits of no distortion. This is why we should severely criticize a tendency of negating history in literary works.

We expect our literature and art in content to represent the people and express the thought of the new era, and in form to retain our national style. All our writers and artists must earnestly study our national heritage in art and literature and consider it

their responsibility to assimilate and develop its splendid traditions.

We have inherited a rich legacy of national literature and art which has not yet been properly explored and utilized. The new, cultural May Fourth Movement introduced us to both Western bourgeois democratic culture and socialist culture; at the same time, it selected from our national culture that which is popular in nature, evaluating such works very highly and elevating them to the position of classical works, for instance, novels like *Water Margin*,[14] *Tales of Three Kingdoms*,[15] *Dream of the Red Chamber*,[16] and *Tales of Learned Scholars*.[17] This re-evaluation of China's classical literature was an achievement of great historic importance.

However, the May Fourth Movement did not succeed in correctly solving the problem of assimilating the splendid heritage of our national literature and art. At that time, some people even took an absolutely incorrect attitude of writing off our national heritage. This attitude, combined with the blind worship of bourgeois culture of the West, exerted a harmful influence on the later development of the new

14*Water Margin* is a novel written by Shih Nai-an about the middle of the 14th century. Its theme is a peasant war in the last years of the Northern Sung dynasty (960-1127 A.D.).

15*Tales of Three Kingdoms* is a historical novel written by Lo Kuan-chung of the 14th century.

16*Dream of the Red Chamber* is one of China's classics, written by the novelist Tsao Hsueh-chin (1719-1764 A.D.). The novel describes the decline of an aristocratic family.

17*Tales of Learned Scholars* is a satirical novel written by Wu Ching-tse (1701-1754 A.D.).

Chinese literature and art. For a long period, the tendency to despise our national heritage was quite common among our modern writers and artists, and even to this day this tendency has not been completely overcome. Many writers and artists have seen only the feudalistic and retrogressive aspects in our heritage; they fail to realize that this heritage is the spiritual treasure-house of our nation, wherein are preserved many realistic works which are popular in character and which display a remarkable level of artistic skill alike in truthfulness of characterization and economy of means.

But many writers and artists have perceived only some secondary and superficial features of these works, while failing to comprehend their essence. Theirs is a narrow and one-sided understanding of the value of our national heritage. For instance, they talk as if the chief characteristic of the Chinese novel was its "serial style,"[18] that of Chinese painting "simple lines, plain colouring," and as if Chinese music consisted of nothing but folk songs and ballads. Such a superficial and over-simplified approach prevents us from making an extensive and careful study of our national heritage.

A systematic re-assessment and study of our national literary and artistic heritage has therefore become one of the most important tasks in our work on literature and art. This work should not be left to

[18] As the Chinese novel evolved from narration by word of mouth, the story told at each "sitting" became a chapter in print. But even then the Chinese novel retained the "serial style."

a handful of specialists. We should mobilize all those working in the fields of literature and art (from specialists to popular artists) to undertake it together.

There are many excellent works of classical and folk art which our writers and artists could use as models. Over a span of more than two thousand years, from the *Book of Odes*[19] and the *Chu Tzu*[20] down to the works of Lu Hsun, the realistic tradition in our literature has radiated an undying light. Our national drama, painting and music, all have their own long and splendid tradition of realism. The main lesson to be drawn from our national heritage is its spirit of realism in boldly disclosing the realities of life, and its artistic techniques.

Creation is a difficult task. A writer not only has to understand the objective world correctly, but must also be able to express his images clearly through his choice of language or some other media. Our predecessors fully realized this difficulty. More than a thousand years ago, a man of letters by the name of Lu Chi wrote in his famous *Wen Fu* what, in present-day language, amounts to this: "The greatest difficulty encountered in writing is that one's thoughts are unable to reflect the objective world, and one's language cannot express one's thoughts." Our great writers of the past expended tremendous efforts to

19*Book of Odes* is one of China's Five Classics edited by Confucius (551-479 B.C.).

20*Chu Tzu*, according to tradition, was edited by Liu Hsiang during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). It contains the works of Chu Yuan (340-278 B.C.) and other poets.

master the art of language. But many of our young writers today pay too little attention to literary technique as the art of language. We need only look at the many unforgettable characters created by Shih Nai-an,[21] Tsao Hsueh-chin[22] and Wu Ching-tse[23] by the use of rich and vivid language to realize what efforts we must make.

We must learn earnestly, sincerely and humbly from veteran artists and specialists in all fields of literature and art, for they have retained much of our precious heritage. We must respect their research work, and honour their achievements in artistic creation. Our state publishing houses must properly edit and systematically bring out the classics of a popular nature, as well as all worth-while and sound research work on these classics and their authors. Organizations of writers and artists should mobilize all their forces to make a thorough and extensive collection of local folk drama, music, literature, art and dances; they must adapt and edit all this material. They should help well-known older artists to summarize their experiences in artistic creation. The evaluation and re-assessment of our national artistic heritage should form an important part of the teaching and research done in our institutes of art.

21Shih Nai-an (14th century) was the author of the novel *Water Margin.*

22Tsao Hsueh-chin (1719-1764 A.D.) was the author of the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber.*

23Wu Ching-tse (1701-1754 A.D.), author of *Tales of Learned Scholars.*

We must also adopt an analytical attitude towards our heritage; we should not take it over indiscriminately, but select and accept only those works which are wholesome and vigorous, and good for the people. First of all, we must draw a distinction between that part of our heritage which is democratic and progressive, and that which is feudal and backward; that part which is realistic and that which is not. No one can any longer doubt that our literary and artistic heritage is rich in popular character and realism; these are features which we must carry forward and develop. We should try to understand our people's past by studying the classics, for then we will be better able to portray our own time, point out the inseparable link between present and past struggles and inculcate in our people a spirit of patriotism. On the other hand, we must resolutely abandon all that is formalistic and non-realistic in our heritage. We should definitely oppose the deep-seated emphasis on imitation of the brush work and style of classical painters, in disregard of delineating real life and of creative work in our national painting. It is high time for us to restore and carry forward the correct tradition of realism in Chinese painting.

Our national literature and art, created by the efforts and genius of our forbears through the ages, have a distinctive style of their own which reflects the psychology and customs of our people and which our people are familiar with and love. Such a style could not have been created without a high level of technique. It is obviously wrong to believe that we can learn

technique only from abroad, and that there is nothing to learn from our own heritage. At the same time, we must also strive to learn from all that is advanced in foreign countries to enrich our own tradition and to absorb what we lack. The Chinese people have always been adept in learning and assimilating advanced experiences from foreign cultures. Now we should continue to learn from the heritage bequeathed to mankind by the great writers and artists of all countries and through all ages. It would be utterly wrong to turn away from such studies. Our performing artists, musicians and painters must study the modern progressive methods of foreign countries. Advanced artistic techniques created by mankind have no national boundary. What we need is to adjust and improve our own national technique by using the methods we have learned from abroad and to further improve our powers of artistic presentation, so that our national style will be brought to a higher level of expression. This will do us no harm; nor will it ruin our art. By long and intensive study and experiment, we should be able to raise the level of our art, both ideologically and technically, till it receives world recognition.

In the reform of the opera and of ballads, we often show an impatient, reckless and mistaken attitude when, by the negation of historical realities, we destroy the realism of operatic art, or by the clumsy use of inappropriate modes of expression taken from foreign drama and music, we destroy the original style of our opera. Yet in the reform of some small

technical matters, at times even in the reform of backward customs, extreme conservatism is often shown. We must, while observing the principle that our national style has to be preserved, do our utmost to improve and reform our technique.

Naturally, national style is not something that never changes. In keeping with the progress in the people's life and on the basis of preserving and developing our original national style, we must further endeavour to create a new national style which is better suited to depicting our people's new life.

The purpose of evaluating and studying our national heritage in both classical and popular literature and art is twofold: to link our new literature and art with the national tradition, and, after the necessary scientific adaptation, reform and re-assessment, to popularize this traditional art among our people so that this heritage will become the spiritual wealth shared in common by our people, uplifting them all.

Let all be said about raising the quality. If in our literary and artistic work we concentrate only on improving the quality and neglect popularization, we shall be moving in the wrong direction. The principle stated by Comrade Mao Tse-tung that literature and art should serve the workers, peasants and soldiers together with the principle he expounded on the correct relationship between raising the standard and popularization — "We must raise our standards on the basis of popularization, and popularization must be guided by the need to raise our standards" — these are

principles that must be strictly observed in our literature and art.

Our writers and artists should, first of all, give attention to all forms of art and literature which lend themselves to popularization and endeavour to adopt these forms. Precisely because of this, the backwardness of recent films and plays cannot be tolerated. Our writers must attach importance to the film, which is a most popular and powerful medium of art, and take an active part in the writing of scenarios, so that more and better films, capable of expressing this great era, will be produced. Such work should be the common responsibility of all our writers. The Chinese Writers' Union should consider organizing its members for participation in the writing of scenarios one of its important tasks. Our writers and poets should create more operas in the traditional style, more plays and new-style operas for the stage. Our new playwrights and composers should take a more active part in dramatic and operatic reforms.

Many of our writers, especially those in the provinces, have participated in the creation of popular literature and art. This is very necessary. Some of the popular works produced reach quite a high standard both ideologically and artistically, and deserve to be taken seriously. But, at the same time, we should point out that there is a tendency to create popular works crudely and carelessly, a tendency which has damaged the prestige of the new art and literature among workers and peasants and thus affected popularization. Other writers show a tendency to

ignore the needs of the masses and their own limitations by undertaking ambitious ventures. They are unwilling to write short, popular works, but blindly attempt to create what they call "major," "high-grade" works. Both these tendencies are quite out of order.

Since popular art and literature are aimed at the workers and peasants, we must ensure that such works teach the masses correct and not mistaken ideas, and that beautiful art forms are used to raise the level of artistic appreciation among the masses, instead of sapping their interest in literature and art by crude and ugly works. It is basically wrong to believe that we may serve the workers and peasants inferior stuff, while writings for intellectuals must be on a high artistic level. All progressive writers who genuinely wish to serve the masses — workers, peasants and soldiers — should consider it their most glorious task to create works which will be understood and loved by these millions of people.

During the past few years, there has been a great increase in amateur cultural activities among the workers, peasants and soldiers. A part of the work of professional writers and artists is based on this amateur art. Therefore, they should maintain constant and permanent contact with the amateurs and should assist the Government, the cultural departments of trade unions and the political departments of the armed forces in guiding such activities.

The workers and peasants show their rich creativeness in art just as they do in battle and in

production. Our writers and artists should actively help and guide them in artistic creation. We must continue to denounce and overcome the aristocratic disdain for the creations by workers and peasants. We should use all possible means to popularize the best works of our writers and artists, paying due attention to the powers of comprehension and appreciation, as well as the tastes and interests of the masses, while giving due consideration to their criticism of these works; we should also help the working people to discover and develop their literary and artistic talents through amateur creation and performances.

However, professional writers and artists must understand the nature of their work when they assist and guide workers and peasants in amateur literary and artistic activities; they should clearly understand that the purpose of such activities is to raise the cultural level of the working people, and not to draw them away from their basic work. Amateur dramatic groups should not lightly develop into professional ones, nor is it good to take amateur writers, actors or singers indiscriminately out of the nation's productive work and turn them into professionals.

To help and guide the workers and peasants correctly in artistic creation and to discover and train writers and artists among them is one of the most important tasks in our work in literature and art.

III

To enable our work in literature and art progress more smoothly; to mobilize and organize further the forces of all our writers and artists; to develop their creative initiative to a higher degree, so that they may devote all their efforts to producing new works worthy of this great era—these, then, are the most urgent tasks in our literature and art. To facilitate the fulfilment of these tasks, it is necessary to intensify the work of the writers' and artists' organizations and to reorganize them according to present-day needs.

It is of great significance that the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists was formed in 1949, after the First All-China Conference of Writers and Artists. For the first time in China's history, the writers and artists of the whole nation, formerly alienated one from the other under the reactionary Kuomintang rule, united and joined forces. It is difficult, however, for this federation of the various literary and art associations—most of which are professional organizations—to give direct and concrete guidance to the creative work and study of the various branches of literature and art. Owing to the fact that each branch of literature and art has its own characteristics, it is better to leave the direction of creative activities to the association concerned.

Now the organization and work of the various associations is being examined and strengthened. The All-China Federation of Writers and Artists, however, will continue to be the federation of all the literary and

art organizations within the nation. It will continue to play its part in strengthening the unity and solidarity among all writers and artists, in mobilizing them for participation in our nation's construction and in defence of world peace.

The national committee has proposed changing the nature of the different associations and drawing up new statutes for them. The various associations are to be voluntary organizations of professional writers and artists. In other words, they will no longer be organizations of ordinary literature and art lovers. Their main task will be to organize the work and study of writers and artists. To fulfil this task they are to encourage the general study and discussion of problems connected with literary and artistic creation; to arrange exhibitions or performances of artistic works; to encourage criticism and self-criticism according to principles on literature and art; to encourage writers and artists to study Marxism-Leninism and the policies of the Party and Government; and make it possible for them to take part, in accordance with their different requirements, in the actual life and struggle of the masses. The draft new statutes require the study of classical literature and art, especially of our national heritage. After reorganization, the associations should accept more students of classical literature, more experts in traditional drama, painting and music as members and as part of their leadership. Not a few representatives from these fields are present at this Conference, showing that the ranks of our people's new writers and

artists have grown since our first conference. "Old-style artists" and "old-style painters" will soon be terms of the past. To give guidance to the popularization of literature and art and the training of young authors and artists has been made an important task of the associations. The literary institutes established by the Chinese Writers' Union and our publications on literature and art should be effective means of training young writers.

During the last few years, branches of the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists in all the provinces and municipalities have done much to organize the writers and artists in their localities for creative work; to co-ordinate propaganda with the central tasks of art and literature, and to help and guide the masses in their amateur cultural activities. In the past, the policy and tasks of these provincial and municipal branches of the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists were not well defined. It should be clearly stated that, in future, they will no longer be federations of associated bodies but organizations of all local writers and artists on a voluntary basis. Their membership shall include all those active in literature, drama, music, and the fine arts. In this way, the necessity of setting up different associations in the provinces and municipalities can be avoided. In order to organize the writers and artists of any locality really effectively, the provincial and municipal federations should admit only those who have reached a certain level of professional competence, instead of accepting members indiscriminately.

Since the provincial and municipal branches of the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists are organizations of writers and artists from their localities, their main task must be to organize their members for creative literary and artistic work, so as to develop local activities in these fields. Many provincial and municipal branches have already formed groups for creative writing, and in places where there are comparatively mature writers, this is a feasible transitional measure. The provincial and municipal federations should not, however, restrict themselves to organizing creative work among members of these groups only—they should give adequate help to all their members who are capable of doing creative work.

Helping and instructing the masses in their amateur artistic activities is another important task of the provincial and municipal federations. They should supply the workers with material for spare-time cultural activities and direct their creative work. These measures should complement and not overlap the work of cultural departments of the Government.

Local publications on literature and art should be made effective means of discovering and training young local writers, supplying popular reading material on literature and art to the masses, and furnishing the materials for their amateur performances in acting and singing.

Such as stated above constitute my opinions on the problems of creative work and organization in literature and art which have to be solved at this Conference. It is my hope that delegates to the Con-

ference will give them due consideration. I am confident that, as a result of this Conference, our literature and art will be further developed and enriched.

THE PEOPLE'S NEW LITERATURE AND ART[24]

A Great Beginning

It is not easy to make a brief but comprehensive report on the overall development, achievement and experience of the literature and art of the liberated areas during the past seven years since Comrade Mao Tse-tung's talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art[25] in 1942. This literature and this art, bursting with vitality, are young and have gained so much experience through the trials the people had to undergo, that we have not yet had the time to study this experience in all its aspects and do a summing-up, with a view to raising our level of literature and art.

However, one thing is certain: After Mao Tse-tung's talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art, both literature and art and the writers and artists of the liberated areas underwent a basic change. A truly new people's literature and art have come into being. The relationship between literature and art

24 A report on literature and art in the liberated areas made to the First All-China Conference of Writers and Artists, July 1949.

25 See footnote 6 on page 17.

and the masses has also changed fundamentally. Literature and art have now become an effective tool for educating the masses and cadres, and the work of our writers and artists requires a high sense of responsibility towards the people.

Ever since the May Fourth Movement (1919),[26] all progressive and revolutionary writers and artists, the late Lu Hsun[27] first and foremost, have made great efforts to integrate literature and art with reality and with the needs of the masses. In the liberated areas, because of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's direct and correct guidance, the support of the People's Army and the People's Government, and the New-Democratic political, economic and cultural reforms, revolutionary literature and art have begun to integrate closely with the life of the worker-peasant-soldier masses. We are beginning to realize the ideals of our pioneers. Naturally, we have only made a start, but it is a great beginning.

In his *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art* Comrade Mao Tse-tung defined the direction literature and art must take in the new China. The writers and artists in the liberated areas have consciously struggled to follow this direction, the complete correctness of which is borne out by their own experience. They now are convinced that any other direction would be wrong.

Let us now examine and explain why the literature

26 See footnote 8 on page 24.

27 See footnote 9 on page 25.

and art of the liberated areas are truly new literature and art of the people.

New Themes, New Characters, New Language, New Forms

Like a tidal wave, new themes and new characters swept into every form of literary and artistic creation. Here is a rough estimate, arranged according to topics, of the 177 works in the *Chinese People's Literature Series* which includes operas, plays, novels, reportage and narrative poetry:

The War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression, the People's War of Liberation (including all forms of mass struggle against the enemy), and life in the People's Army—101.

Land reform in the countryside and other anti-feudal struggles (including rent reduction, settling scores with landlords, struggles against superstition and for the freedom of choice in marriage, etc.)—41.

Industrial and agricultural production—16.

The history of the revolution—7.

Other topics (such as about the working style of cadres, etc.)—12.

The above figures show the wide scope of literature and art in the liberated areas and the general direction and different aspects of the Chinese people's struggle for liberation.

The struggle for national liberation, the class struggle and the struggle for production are the pre-

dominant themes. As the workers, peasants and soldiers have become the masters in society, so have they become the central figures in the works of literature and art. Intellectuals are generally portrayed as cadres in all sorts of work for the cause of the people's liberation, as brain-workers working together with manual workers. Themes about intellectuals who take no part in the people's struggle, who live only within their own small circle and individualistic world, are obviously worthless and have no place in the literary and artistic works of the liberated areas. There can be no doubt that the works produced since the May Fourth Movement did play a useful role of enlightenment in their descriptions of awakened intellectuals, their quest for light and their hopes, and even in the expression of a sense of loneliness before the ideals of the pioneers were linked up with any popular movement. But the Chinese people, having struggled for more than twenty years under the leadership of the Communist Party, now have a high level of political consciousness and a feeling for organization. If we remain within the same narrow circle to which intellectuals have been accustomed at a time when the masses are devoting themselves to the great task of determining the fate of China instead of getting to know them and describing them fully in our literature and art, we shall not only be isolating ourselves from the masses, but turning our back on historical truth and the principles of realism.

Writers and artists in the liberated areas have endeavoured to come close to the workers, peasants

and soldiers. They have gone to the frontlines, to rural areas, to the factories. They have actually participated in the fighting, in the land reform and in the production movement. They have put up with many hardships. What is especially praiseworthy is that many writers and artists have taken an active part in the fighting, completely at one with our soldiers. In the frontline trenches, they have helped to entertain and inspire the troops. Some have died a glorious death on the battlefield. Our highest respect is for these writers and artists, who will live in our memory.

Writers and artists in the liberated areas have studied Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse-tung's theory of the Chinese revolution. They have taken part in the various mass struggles and practical work, and from their own experience they came to understand the policies of the Chinese Communist Party, the People's Liberation Army and the People's Government. Herein lies the basic reason for the healthy growth of literature and art in the liberated areas.

Naturally, a profound sense of militancy pervades our literature and art. We already have works which deal fairly successfully with the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression, the People's War of Liberation, the People's Army, the struggles in the villages and the production movement. All the battles of the Chinese People's Liberation Army have received the full support and co-operation of the people because these battles were fought in the interests of the masses, something which had never before happened in

Chinese history. This mass support given to our armies in battle is reflected in many of our works.

Ma Feng and Hsi Jung's *Heroes of Luliang Mountain,* Chao Shu-li's *Changes in Li Village,* Yuan Ching and Kung Chueh's *Daughters and Sons,* Shao Tse-nan's *Mine Field,* Hu Tan-fo's *Look Further Ahead,* Ma Chien-ling's *Bloody Tears of Vengeance,* Ke Chung-ping's *Unconquerable Militia,* the Militant Dramatic Group's collective work *Heroine Liu Hu-lan* (drama) —all record faithfully the heroism shown by the peasants in their struggles, armed and otherwise, against the Japanese invaders and Kuomintang reactionaries. Liu Pai-yu's *Three Invincible Fighters* and *Political Commissar,* Hua Shan's *Heroic October,* Li Wen-po's *Blood on the Sleeve,* Han Hsi-liang's *The Guerillas of the Yimeng Mountains* and other short pieces all directly reflect the People's Liberation Army's heroic spirit and boundless loyalty to the cause of the revolution.

The outstanding works reflecting the peasants' struggle, novels such as Chao Shu-li's *Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai,* Ting Ling's *The Sun Shines over the Sangkan River,* Chou Li-po's *Hurricane,* Wang Li's *Fine Weather,* Wang Hsi-chien's *World-Shaking Upheaval,* drama like Li Chih-hua's *Struggle Against Counter-Struggle*—all reflect, to a certain extent, the great rural movements for rent reduction, interest reduction and land reform. *The White-haired Girl,* written by Ho Ching-chih and Ting Yi, Yuan Chang-ching's *The River of Scarlet Leaves,* and Fu To's *Wang Hsiu-luan* (drama), and novels like Chao Shu-li's *Hsiao Erh-hei's*

Marriage, Han Tse's *Confusion*, Kung Chueh's *Story of a Woman's Emancipation*, Hung Lin's *Li Hsiu-lan*, Kang Cho's *My Two Landlords*—all these present as their central characters women who have suffered severe oppression in the feudal society, and show the bitterness of the rural struggle against feudalism, at the same time as they describe men and women who enjoy a new, happy life after the liberation.

Works that take agricultural production and the mutual-aid and co-operation movement as their theme are novels like Liu Ching's *Sowing* and Ouyang Shan's *Kao Kan-ta*. Tsao Ming's novel *The Moving Force*, plays like Chen Chi-tung's *How an Artillery Shell Is Made* and *Song of the Red Flag* by Lu Mei and others and the film script *The Bridge*—all these describe the struggle of the working class and its vanguard in rehabilitating China's industry.

On the subject of contemporary history, the famous long poem *Wang Kuei and Li Hsiang-hsiang*, the opera *Chou Tse-shan* which is a collective work of the Lu Hsun Arts' Institute, and Kao Lang-ting's novel *Old Mrs. Lei*—all these describe the agrarian revolution in northern Shensi.

All these works tell how our people, in their various struggles against national and feudal oppression, have overcome difficulties, remoulded themselves and produced heroic and exemplary personalities. Many of our works describe actual events, as for instance, the novel *Liu Hu-lan, Story of a Girl Revolutionary*. Such works are characteristic of the people's new era. We live in a period full of struggle

and action. We have seen with our own eyes all sorts of heroes and models among our people. They are great and yet ordinary. They are creating historic miracles with their own sweat and blood. They are the true makers of world history, and, with all our hearts, we cannot sing their praises enough. Even if we merely sketch them, and inadequately at that, we shall be less severely condemned by history than if we let them fall into oblivion by not writing about them at all. Therefore writing about "real people" and "real events" should not be indiscriminately disapproved. Let us say that such writing is one mode of artistic creation. As long as we select appropriate subject-matter and give it a definite artistic finish, we can produce works which have not only educational but also artistic value. The Soviet Union's *Chapayev* is a fine example of this.

Heroes are not born, they are steeled in the forge of battle. In the process of changing history, people also change themselves. The workers, peasants and soldiers are not without shortcomings. Often and unavoidably, they retain some of the undesirable ideas and habits of the old society. But, thanks to the education and leadership of the Communist Party and with the help of criticism from the masses, people with shortcomings are conquering their shortcomings and backward elements are getting the better of their backwardness to become new, heroic personalities. Much of our literature and art describes the difficult process by which the masses improve themselves through struggle. Only in struggle can the moral

qualities and noble character of our brave, industrious people attain the fullest development.

In works which describe women, from the leading characters in *The White-haired Girl* and *The River of Scarlet Leaves* to Che Chu-ying in *Story of a Woman's Emancipation* and Liu Hu-lan, a girl revolutionary, how many centuries of spiritual progress seem to have been covered! Over a long period, they suffered hardships, and shed not only tears but blood.

Literature which depicts the change in some of our backward soldiers has special educational significance. It describes the remarkable results of the political education carried on in our army for class-consciousness and democratic ideals; and, at the same time, spurs us on to greater achievements in educating our men. Tu Feng's play *Li Kuo-jui* and Liu Pai-yu's short story *Three Invincible Fighters* are both successful works from this point of view.

Ma Chien-ling's drama *Everyone Is Happy* and many other similar short plays tell of the reform of loafers in the rural regions.

Song of the Red Flag reflects the struggle between the progressive forces and backward elements among the workers in their competition for increased production. A backward girl develops a responsible attitude to her job, thanks to the patient teaching and concern of the factory manager and the help of some progressive co-workers.

The greatest enlightener of China's new cultural movement, Lu Hsun, lashed out bitterly at our so-called "national traits." These "national traits" were actual-

ly a state of spiritual backwardness caused by the long suffering of the people under feudalism and imperialism. Lu Hsun criticized the passive, gloomy, tragic aspects of the Chinese people's character, and looked forward to the birth of new national traits.

Having gone through thirty years of struggle, the Chinese people are already beginning to strike off the spiritual fetters which imperialism and feudalism imposed upon them, to develop the industry, courage and other fine qualities for which they are noted. New national traits are now in the making. Our literature and art reflect and expedite their growth. We may still criticize our people's shortcomings, but we do so in the spirit of Comrade Mao Tse-tung who has taught us to "protect and educate the people." We must not exaggerate their shortcomings. Compared with their enormous contributions to the War of Liberation and to production, their shortcomings hardly amount to anything. We should be better able to see their new glory. This is what distinguishes our new era, the era of the masses, from all previous ages, and distinguishes our new people's literature and art from all previous literature and art.

Because the literature and art of the liberated areas are new in content, there are, correspondingly, many innovations in form. This was evident first in the language. After the May Fourth Movement, progressive and revolutionary writers and artists were discussing the question of adopting a popular and national form, but were unable to find a practicable, thorough-going solution. After Comrade Mao Tse-

tung's talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art, the problems of "popularization" and "national forms" came to be solved naturally, or, at least, the correct road was found to their solution, because the writers and artists made great efforts to mingle with workers and peasants, and studied their language and budding literature. A unique feature of the literature of the liberated areas is that its language is fairly popular in form. Language is the major element of literary works and the primary indication of national forms. Chao Shu-li's outstanding success is on the one hand due to his deep understanding of rural life and rural class relationships, and of the complexity of the struggle between the various classes in the countryside, an understanding that makes his works highly realistic and vivid. But, on the other hand, his success is also due to his language, which is truly the language of the masses, and has been worked over and polished into such simplicity and naturalness that it does not have a trace of artificiality. In his works, artistic form and ideological content are integrated to a rather high degree. Many other writers too, especially those who have worked with the masses, have done no little to improve the language.

Another important characteristic of the literature and art of the liberated areas is that they preserve close ties with the national and particularly the people's traditional literature and art. In fiction, there is *Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai;* in poetry and song, we have *Wang Kuei and Li Hsiang-hsiang;* and in drama, *The White-haired Girl* and *Bloody Tears of Vengeance.*

Works that prove most popular with the masses are all of this nature.

Why are new dramas like *The White-haired Girl* and *Bloody Tears of Vengeance* record-breaking in their popularity, and why have they had such a deep influence? The main reasons are these: During the people's war against the Japanese invaders, such works presented the theme of class struggle in bold relief and with a strong, romantic colour. At the same time, they were presented in forms which the masses were familiar with and could readily accept. *The White-haired Girl* was a further attempt to create a new-type drama on the foundation of folk opera after the success of the first *yangko*[28] drama, *Brother and Sister Pioneers*. After Comrade Mao Tse-tung's talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art, our writers and artists did considerable research and constructive work in popular literary and artistic forms. Their major achievement was the promotion of the *yangko* form. We have created a new popular *yangko* on the old rural basis. Its influence has spread all over China.

The liberated area woodcuts, New Year's pictures, picture story books, etc., are all rich in Chinese style and flavour. We all know the woodcuts of Ku Yuan, Yen Han, Li Chun, and the cartoons of Hua Chun-wu

28 The *yangko* dance is a highly artistic folk dance, with light and brisk steps, which reflects life in the countryside. Its name ("rice-shoot song") derives from the fact that it used to be sung and danced during rice-transplanting time. Recently, it has been developed into a form of short operetta popular in the countryside as well as in the cities.

and Tsai Jo-hung. In music, many new songs have been produced which are widely popular and retain the flavour of folk songs.

We make use of the old forms not simply by "pouring new wine into old bottles," but rather by "deriving the new from the old." This is entirely according to the laws of development usual with a national literature and art. Lu Hsun said, "In adopting old forms, some things must be excised. Since it is so, other things must be added in. The result is the appearance of a new form, and that is change." Lu Hsun's forecast has already begun to be realized in the liberated areas. Now no one can say that *Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai* or *Wang Kuei and Li Hsiang-hsiang* or the *yangko* dances are of the old form. On the contrary, they are the new forms for which we have been searching. Formerly, we simply considered the forms of feudal literature and art as old and those of bourgeois literature and art as new. This point of view was based on blind worship of the bourgeois culture of the West, which was, in essence, a reflection of semi-colonial ideas. So far as the people's literature and art are concerned, the forms of both feudal and bourgeois literature and art are, in a certain sense, all old forms. We do not refuse to make use of them, but they must be revised. We shall revise them from a national, scientific and popular viewpoint so that they can be used to serve the people. This is our basic attitude towards all old forms, including folk forms.

Writers and artists of the liberated areas learned

much from folk forms, and will undoubtedly learn still more from them in future. However, this is not the same thing as saying that, apart from folk forms, we do not want any other forms or regard them as unimportant. No, that is definitely not the case. We highly respect and wish to learn what is useful from the fine heritage of all native and foreign traditional forms, especially from Soviet socialist literature and art.

We are continuously revising and expanding the folk forms which we have selected. For instance, the *yangko* dance developed from expressions of the new life of our workers, peasants and soldiers in new dance forms like "production dance" and "dance of the advancing army." And foreign forms, once they are used to depict the life and struggles of the Chinese people and are accepted by the masses, will inevitably change gradually into our own national and popular forms of art. Our workers, peasants, soldiers and cadres are quick to accept new things. Kuo Mo-jo's *Chu Yuan*, Mao Tun's *Spring Festival* and *Decay* and other fine works with rich ideological contents produced in the former Kuomintang-controlled areas have had a great many readers in the liberated areas and been of great educational value to them.

By reflecting the struggles of the workers, peasants and soldiers, and by adopting the forms to which they are accustomed, the literature and art of the liberated areas are of great use in rallying and educating the masses and cadres. Peasants and soldiers who see *The White-haired Girl*, *Bloody Tears of*

Vengeance and *Liu Hu-lan* are aroused to a class hatred of the enemy, and burn for revenge. "Revenge Hsi-erh!" they shout angrily. "Revenge Wang Jen-hou!" "Revenge Liu Hu-lan!" Some troops even organized a "Liu Hu-lan Vengeance Group." So close is the relationship between literature and art and the people, and between literature and art and the political reality, that writers and artists in the liberated areas now take requests and reactions of their audiences and readers into full consideration. They serve the people whole-heartedly, and count it the greatest honour and happiness to do so.

Spare-time Literary and Artistic Activities Among the Workers, Peasants and Soldiers

Apart from professional writers and artists, there are now writers and artists among the workers, peasants and soldiers in the liberated areas. Thanks to political and economic reforms, the people in the liberated areas have been able to turn to cultural pursuits and have shown astonishing powers of literary and artistic creation.

In the People's Liberation Army, which continues in the fine tradition of the Red Army period, literature and art have become a powerful, political weapon. The soldiers organize recreation centres, hold propaganda rallies, publish wall newspapers, leaflets, pictorials, and even stage performances in the trenches. All these activities reflect in artistic form the men's

own life and struggles and have become mass movements. Let us take just a few examples.

During the Battle of Chinsi in Northeast China, thousands of copies of "rifle poems" and other poetry and frontline propaganda leaflets, written by the soldiers of one column of the Fourth Field Army, were distributed among the fighters in the trenches who read them eagerly. With the contents as a basis, they examined their own conduct, sent challenges to other units and competed in making up still more poems and songs that raised the men's morale. In the Huaihai Campaign, members of the Second Field Army composed many "rifle poems" and battlefield propaganda leaflets. These were usually illustrated and became the men's prized possessions, inspiring them to emulate the heroic feats described.

Among the "rifle poems" written by the soldiers there are many good pieces, like *Defeat the Kuomintang's New First Army:*

In felling a tree, we must pull up the roots,
In fighting, we must defeat the Kuomintang's New
First Army.
Soldier for soldier,
General for general,
Who says the new man
Can't beat slave soldiers?
Smash the New First Army,
Yank out Tu Yu-ming's[29] teeth.

[29]Tu Yu-ming, a general of the reactionary Kuomintang clique, was captured in 1949 by the People's Liberation Army in the Huaihai Campaign during the War of Liberation.

Three failures made Chou Yu[30] die,
Three failures will make Tu Yu-ming cry.
Like iron that's forged into steel,
Our troops have been tested in battle and never known defeat.
When we've destroyed Chiang Kai-shek's manpower resources,
Our army will be even stronger!

What courage and confidence! How can such an army help being victorious?

Here are two other examples:

My cannon, you are very old,
But you have made no special mark.
Another chance for attack has come—
Don't lag behind again this time!
—*Don't Lag Behind Again.*

My rifle
Is polished, shiny and bright,
In this counter-attack
I'll get old Chiang!
—*My Rifle.*

By careful practice, the battery which manned the old cannon referred to in the first poem made their weapon more effective. The author of the second

[30]Chou Yu was a young general under warlord Sun Chuan during the Period of the Three Kingdoms (220-265 A.D.), which came into being when each of the three big warlords founded his own kingdom. According to tradition, Chou Yu died of frustration, after being outwitted three times by Chuko Kung-ming, the strategist of Shu, one of the three kingdoms.

poem actually shouted it out on the battlefield as he charged the enemy. So closely related were art and battle.

The drama movement in the army has adopted the method of small troupe performances very effectively. Soldiers write and act the parts of soldiers. When the play is over, they discuss the contents as a basis for self-criticism of their daily conduct. The cultural movement in the army, helped and guided by full-time art troupes and propaganda teams, has become a means of self-education as well as recreation for the fighters. The men have shown great creative ability and many interesting works have been produced, often by anonymous writers.

Amateur art has an even greater scope in the rural areas. In the old liberated areas, drama troupes are quite common in the countryside; in fact, in some districts each village has one. They are usually active at definite seasons, particularly round the New Year's holiday, which, for them, is their art festival. The villagers do their own writing and acting. They write mostly about their own villages, and closely relate their plays to current major problems. They are the leading characters in their own works. Although most of these works use old folk forms as a basis, they have been reformed to a varying degree and have developed into many new forms of popular literature and art. These are the plays which are actually produced by the peasants themselves. Of these numerous plays only a select few have been published in various parts of the country. These

dramas have had a direct and immediate influence on the development of the rural struggle; they have acted as a stimulus to agricultural production and to the peasants' education and ideological remoulding. The peasants call the new *yangko* "struggle *yangko.*" During the land reform movement, many plays were quite correctly called "emancipation dramas." The new *yangko* plays have become indispensable to the cultural life of the villagers. Naturally it is not only in plays, but also in other literary and artistic forms, that the peasants demonstrate their creative ability. During the land reform, particularly, the peasants produced innumerable poems and plays about emancipation. Some of these are indeed gems of folk art, for instance:

Chichen Taoist Temple
Is a fine place.
Fir and pine trees grow in the stone courtyard.
Rip up the stone flagging and look,
They are growing on the backs of the poor.
—*Rip Up the Stone Flagging and Look.*

Or, take the following, which quietly and yet powerfully expressed the contradictions between the peasantry and the landlords:

When you work for the landlord,
He gives you watery soup.
Stir that great pot with a spoon
And the waves will knock you dead.
His corn muffins have wings,
His wheat cakes scale like fish!

He doesn't wash his bowls,
His chopsticks hurt your lips.
He refuses to lend you money,
And his words bowl you over.
How can a man live on, in times like these!
—*When You Work for the Landlord.*

Or, this satire on landlord-usurers:

To live like a man, don't borrow at compound interest!
You borrow for one year,
It takes ten years to pay back.
"Shall I repay what's over the round figure?"
"Don't bother, don't bother," says he.
A few years later, he changes his mind,
And comes after you for another twenty or thirty thousand!
—*Compound Interest.*

We have not only collected poems and songs by peasants; we have also discovered and encouraged the people's artists. The Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region has produced Han Chi-hsiang and North China Wang Tsun-san, both masters of the ballad. In all liberated regions, a great deal has been done to reform folk art as well as its performers.

Because we did not control the big cities until very recently, the workers' amateur activities in literature and art have only just begun; but something has been accomplished and some experience gained. Now, workers' *yangko* troupes exist in every city and factory, railway workers' and miners' club. Cultural recreation centres are being established in the factories. Most of the factories have wall newspapers.

The workers are revealing their creative ability. Not a few workers write in their spare time about events in their factory for city newspapers; or they illustrate their own factory newspapers. Because their cultural level is relatively high and their political consciousness rising quickly, their literary and artistic activities are bound to expand rapidly.

The literary and artistic activities of workers, peasants and soldiers have given new blood and new life to the literature and art of the liberated areas. Their works and those of the professionals form the two integral parts of this literature and art. The workers, peasants and soldiers not only accept the new literature and art; they also take an active part in their creation. Once given a chance, the latent revolutionary vigour of our workers, peasants and soldiers will prove indeed inexhaustible. Similarly, they have shown unlimited vigour and ability in artistic creations. To popularize literature and art, the creative enthusiasm of the masses must be aroused. Professional writers and artists must direct the masses in their creative endeavours; they must also draw sustenance from such works to enrich their own. It is an error to take a contemptuous or indifferent attitude towards the creations of the masses. That kind of attitude was corrected in the main after Comrade Mao Tse-tung's talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art. Yet, while they give guidance to the masses in their literary and artistic activities, professional writers and artists must remember that these activities are amateur in nature and should not

interfere with work in factories and fields, nor with the military duty of the soldiers. Since our literature and art serve a political purpose, they must serve our struggle and our country's productive efforts; that means, they must expedite the former and not hinder the latter.

Thus, we must observe the seasonal nature of rural life and not lay too much stress on regular activities. In the factories, we must keep in mind, production is collective and highly organized; in the army, we must fit into combat conditions and characteristics. Some drama troupes in the villages and factories follow the correct rule that "dramatics must not interfere with work." Nothing too ambitious should be attempted, and the tendency to produce elaborate and costly dramas overcome. It must be remembered that the most important aims of popular literature and art are to educate the workers, peasants and soldiers, and to raise their political consciousness and enthusiasm for work and struggle. Popular literature and art must not be fostered for their own sake. Literature and art cannot be divorced from the current political tasks and the needs of the masses.

Reform of Old Chinese Opera

To develop the people's new literature and art, it is necessary to eliminate not only the reactionary literature and art which served the interests of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism; we

must also put an end to their influence on the people's literature and art. Also, we must take appropriate steps to reform the traditional literature and art still in circulation among the people, so as to meet the new requirements of the people. Old opera is an important heritage of China's national art; it has close links with the masses and is very popular among them. At the same time, as a product of the feudal period, it contained much poisonous feudal ideology and was, over a long period, used by the feudal ruling class as a tool to deceive and drug the toiling masses. Therefore, the reform of old opera is a very important task and one that involves a complex ideological struggle. We have adopted the method of reforming old opera gradually, first in content and then in form. We are opposed to regarding it simply as a means of recreation, promoting it uncritically for its artistic form while ignoring the harmful parts of its content. We are also opposed to the viewpoint and method of those who regard the whole of old opera as feudalistic and, therefore, assume the attitude of completely discrediting it and even ban it by administrative fiat. This of course would be wrong. The fact that the masses like old opera shows its popular character. That the people like it is a question of ideology, and any question concerning the ideology of the masses can never and should not be solved by way of administrative orders. We should realize that, as the political consciousness of the masses rises, they will naturally become critical towards the feudalistic and retrogressive traits of old opera and discard them. In the

reform of opera, we must start from actual conditions. First of all, the old operas should be judged from the standpoint of whether or not they conform to the people's interests. We must restrict the scope for those operas which are detrimental to the interests of the people, exposing their reactionary content so that drama troupes will voluntarily refuse to perform them, and the masses will not want to see them. Operas beneficial to the people, expressing opposition to feudal oppression and corrupt officials, or lauding the fibre and undaunted spirit of the nation and lauding public spirit, are the kind of cultural heritage that should be accepted and encouraged. Old opera popularizes the history of China, but, to a certain extent, it is a history steeped in the ideology of the feudal ruling class—a distorted, perverted kind of history. Our duty is to present historical truth without any distortion and to create an historical opera according to the concepts of historical materialism, an opera that will give the masses a new and scientific interpretation of history. During the past few years, we have created such operas, for instance, *Escape to Liang Mountain* and *The Storming of Chu Village*. Their chief value lies in that they indicate that Peking opera[31] is developing into new historical opera.

[31]Peking opera is a type of classical opera, the themes of which are mainly historical. It contains songs and dances, as well as acrobatics. Peking opera has assimilated and climaxed the best features of the older Kunshan opera and of many other regional types of opera. That is why Peking opera is richer in content and has a wide appeal. It is called Peking opera, because it originated and became popular in Peking, during the Ching dynasty (1644-1911 A.D.).

Of course, after revision the old opera, especially the different kinds of opera flourishing in various parts of our country, can also depict modern life. All old operas should be made to develop in this direction. The new Shensi opera, the new Shaohsing opera, and the new *Ping Chu*[32] have all manifested this possibility with marked success.

If we are to reform old opera, we must rally together and reform the opera actors and singers. Under the people's new government, the position of performing artistes is much higher in society than ever before. Most of them are willing to reform and to adopt new concepts and methods to raise their ideological and artistic levels. Guided by Mao Tse-tung's principles on literature and art, writers and artists of both the new and old types have not only formed a united front but they are also gradually eliminating the differences that separate them.

For a Higher Ideological and Artistic Level, for the Creation of Works Worthy of This Great Era!

Above, I have outlined the circumstances of the literature and art of the liberated areas since Comrade Mao Tse-tung's talks at the Yenan Forum on

32*Ping Chu* is a regional type of opera, popular in the eastern part of Hopei Province. Its music is developed from the *Lien Hua Lao*, a kind of folk ballad; in form, it derives from the *Peng Peng*, a kind of harvest dance. *Ping Chu* contains both songs and dialogue; it is a form of drama which is very simple and easy to appreciate.

Literature and Art. We have accomplished something. But should we remain satisfied with these achievements? There is not the slightest reason for such satisfaction. Our work in literature and art lags far behind the development and requirements of the revolution. On the literary and art front, achievements are far below those attained on the military front.

Now that the people's revolution has triumphed, China is entering upon a new historical period—a period of economic construction on a vast scale, of great political and cultural advances, of the build-up of national defence. Our writers and artists must stay close to the masses, probe deeply into reality, and take an active part in the people's struggle and in national construction. They should aim to serve their country and people better through their creations. The course of China's construction is essentially one of converting an agricultural country into an industrial country. Formerly, because our work was largely in the countryside, our literature and art reflected mainly the rural struggle and agricultural production. There were very few works describing industrial production and the working class. Even at present, we only have a few rather good works like *The Moving Force* and *Song of the Red Flag*. The working class is the leading force, while the peasants and revolutionary intellectuals are the main forces, of the People's Democratic Dictatorship. Our works should lay stress on depicting these three forces. Intellectuals in the liberated areas, ideologically remoulded and steeled

through many years of practical work, are radically changed in their thoughts, feelings and working style. They have identified themselves very largely with the workers and peasants, and this new spirit should be reflected in our works. Of course, literature and art can and should describe all classes and the activities of all sorts of people; for the life and struggle of the workers, peasants and soldiers can only be fully reflected through describing their actual relationships with other classes. Yet stress must unquestionably be placed on the workers, peasants and soldiers themselves, because they are the backbone of the people's struggle and of our national construction.

Industrial and agricultural production and construction will become important themes. But construction is not likely to proceed without struggle, for construction itself implies struggle. Although the armed enemy has been defeated, hidden enemies are constantly scheming to destroy us, especially our industrial construction. We must sharpen our vigilance. On the other hand, although the working class and the bourgeoisie co-operate in accordance with the policy of "promoting both state and private enterprises, and benefiting both labour and capital," there are still irreconcilable contradictions between them. Works of literature and art must expose all the main contradictions and struggles in our social life.

The revolutionary war will soon be over. Is there any further need for works about the People's War of Liberation or the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression? Yes, there is, for while we describe

the peaceful construction of our country we must also portray the revolutionary wars of the Chinese people. There are potential writers at the fighting fronts, qualified to record the events of this great war, but perhaps they have not yet had the time to write. Well, that time has now come. The Chinese people are keenly looking forward to a good number of great works describing this war. The writers must truthfully tell of the courage and wisdom of the people's fighters, their high sense of revolutionary collectivism and heroism. The writers must also truthfully reflect in their works Mao Tse-tung's military theories which have been the source of every victory of the people's army. And they must produce the most valuable and polished chronicles of the liberation war waged by the Chinese people.

Our works have educational meaning chiefly because of their correct ideological content. But the quality of this ideological content must be still further improved. All progressive writers must, as Hegel said, reflect "the ideological level of their times." Today, this means reflecting the Marxist-Leninist level. Only in this way can we acquire the ability to independently observe, analyse and synthetize life in all its manifestations, that is, the ability of artistic generalizations. Only in this way shall we be able to combine a penetrating portrayal of life in all its aspects with a clear and bold statement of our policies. Thus we shall not distort the basic facts in life for the sake of a certain policy, nor shall we obscure the basic thoughts guiding a certain policy for the sake of

realistic detail in some particular situation. Only in this way shall we be able to present our positive characters—that is, the heroes and models of the masses—with still greater force. Only in this way can we overcome our earlier shortcomings in describing negative characters better than positive ones. Only in this way can we produce images representative of the masses, as well as images of their leaders and of leading cadres.

We stand in need of works like the Soviet play, *The Front,* which criticizes the working style of cadres. To write such works requires a high ideological level in the authors, or at least an ideological level equal to that of the cadres criticized. After Comrade Mao Tse-tung's talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art, the writers began to learn how to describe workers and peasants because they began mingling with them. This was a great step forward. Now we must learn how to describe the cadres holding positions of leadership. We must consider everything from the point of view of both the masses and the leadership. We will thus broaden our outlook and, consequently, raise our works to a still higher ideological level.

In order to create works that are rich in ideological content, writers must first study politics, Marxism-Leninism and basic Party and Government policies. Policies guide the people's actions; they are formulated on the basis of actual conditions and for the benefit of the country and the people. In the new society, a society of the People's Democratic Dictatorship, the people are the masters of their own destiny. Their actions are no longer impulsive, haphazard and

blind, but conscious, organized and directed towards definite goals. Their actions are guided by policy, and they decide their own destiny through policies that are based on their own interests. It is in this basic principle that the new era of the people differs from all previous ages. So, if we depart from this concept of policy, we shall not be able to understand the basic principle that governs our people's lives in this new era. Only by a correct concept of policy can writers and artists describe relationships between individuals of differing character; differences in the character of, and relationships between, the various classes of society, and the destiny of each individual as a reflection of the destiny of the class to which he or she belongs. The ideological quality of a work is manifested chiefly by its penetrating description and exposure of the struggle and relationships between the various classes. Only writers and artists with a correct concept of policy can avoid conscious or unconscious distortions through casual, emotional, impressionistic or individualistic selection of mere fragments of life.

Needless to say, the reflection of policy through literary and artistic works must stem from reality and not merely from the wording of the policy in question. Literature and art must clearly portray the circumstances under which policies are carried out and the reactions of each class to such implementation. They must describe the entire intricate process through which Party and Government policies become the policies which the masses accept as their own. Only

in this way can literature and art truly reflect life. Propaganda for some specific policy must not use general or abstract terms which will impair or lessen the truthfulness of artistic works.

The artistic level of our works must also be raised. We have to admit that, as far as form is concerned, there is still room for improvement in the works of the liberated areas. We must study technique, but we must oppose and guard against any view that technique is all-important (separating technique from ideology, blindly worshipping Western technique, etc.) and against a tendency towards formalism. We must firmly uphold the new aesthetic standards of the people's literature and art. All forms are beautiful that are "fresh, vigorous and possessed of a truly Chinese style and flavour which the ordinary people love to hear and see." Any other forms are ugly.

Our writers must put forward their best efforts in creating works of beauty and ideological value which are worthy of this great revolutionary epoch. There is no shirking this responsibility.

Popularization Still the Foremost Task

When we raise the question of improving the ideological and artistic standards of our literature and art we must not neglect the task of their popularization. Speaking of literature and art as a whole, popularization is still a task of primary importance. This is the case not only because our victory through-

out the country and the expansion of the new liberated areas require that we first undertake such popularization for the masses in those regions (for instance, we must energetically promote amateur art in the factories); but also because popularization is not firmly grounded in the old liberated areas and insufficient in scope.

Now the emphasis of our work has been shifted from the countryside to the cities. But to forget the countryside now that we are in the cities would be a mistake. In his work *On New Democracy,* Comrade Mao Tse-tung stated, "The problem of mass culture is virtually the elevation of the peasant culture." In his recently published *On People's Democratic Dictatorship,* he stated further: "The education of the peasantry presents a serious problem." We must, therefore, utilize all facilities offered by modern cities and modern communications, and use all sorts of means to continue our work of popularizing culture among the peasants.

The rural drama movement has a rather firm basis in the old liberated areas. The existing drama troupes should be reorganized and reinforced. The groups of apprentices of old drama need to be reformed. We must also organize and improve story-telling and the other forms of folk art. In this work special attention must be paid to guiding and encouraging the peasants in their creative efforts; we must also provide suitable plays and songs for them. The urban professional troupes should maintain contact with rural drama troupes and help them by demonstrating

methods of dramatic training; by giving sample performances; and by training in rotation at regular intervals. The urban troupes should consider such guidance and help to the rural drama troupes one of their most important responsibilities. In addition to their own artistic activities, we should offer to the rural communities all the new forms of art; for instance, the showing of films in the countryside can be developed on a wider scale.

In the cities, we must promote amateur art activities in the factories. When we came to the cities, we introduced the workers to the new *yangko* developed from the peasants' old *yangko*, which showed the workers how the peasants, exploited by the landlords in the past, rose to fight, and what contribution they made to the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression and to the People's War of Liberation. Thus the working class came to acknowledge the importance of their permanent ally, the peasantry. We should also tell the workers that the cities must use every means to assist the peasants by giving them not only material assistance like consumer goods, but also spiritual food. Our cadres working in the country must, in turn, tell the peasants how the working class is struggling to restore and expand industrial production, how we place our reliance on the working class to convert China from an agricultural country to an industrial one, and why the working class is the leading class in the people's revolution. We must show the peasants facts that the cities are helping them and are working out plans to satisfy their material and cultural

needs. Only in this way can we strengthen the alliance between the workers and peasants, so that the city and the countryside will co-operate not only economically, but culturally as well. Furthermore, we must continue to satisfy the cultural demands of the peasants and help raise their cultural level through the rural co-operatives and similar means. This, then, is the main goal of the cultural revolution of our New Democracy.

All writers and artists, including the professionals, must keep a constant watch over the workers', peasants' and soldiers' activities in literature and art, study their particular problems and consider guidance and popularization the common duty of all those who work in the field of literature and art. This supervisory work cannot be done piecemeal, as something unimportant, something that can be dispensed with. This work must be planned, and systematically and whole-heartedly performed.

Opera still occupies an important place in the cultural life of the masses, both in the cities and in the countryside. This is a fact which cannot be ignored in our popularization work. The reform of old opera must be carried out systematically, in a planned way. Experience proves that the masses welcome the reformed Peking and local operas with their new content, and that actors are willing to rehearse these new operas, and are actually doing so. The present problem is that there are not enough new scripts. Thus, the reform of opera hinges on an adequate supply of scripts. We must, therefore,

organize the actors, together with the new writers and artists, to create new scripts or revise the old ones. The People's Government and departments concerned with guiding our literature and art will give them the necessary assistance and leadership.

We must not be impatient in reforming old opera. On the other hand, we must oppose the erroneous conservative approach which puts inordinate emphasis on the artistic "uniqueness" of old opera, and thus lacks the courage to tackle old opera and break with the old forms.

Under a correct policy, mobilization of, and reliance on, the unified efforts of the actors will certainly bring new and greater results in the reform of old opera.

Criticism and Strengthened Leadership in the Field of Literature and Art

For the healthy development of literature and art, we need correct criticism, and this is the wish of all. At present, there is a dearth of criticism, especially of sincere criticism with a high ideological level. Criticism and self-criticism is all too rare in the literary and artistic fields. Because the reading public is without criticial guidance, it chooses books to read at random. Many young authors, lacking helpful criticism, have to grope their way and make mistakes that could have been avoided. Owing to the lack of the necessary criticism, the unity among writers and

artists often is not in principle. We need to advance the ideological struggle all along the united front of writers and artists. We should constantly point out what in literature and art is to be praised and what is to be condemned. Criticism must be guided by Marxist-Leninist principles on literature and art; it must express in crystallized form the opinions of the masses. It must encourage self-criticism among the writers and artists and raise the ideological and artistic quality of their works. Criticism is an important means of the Communist Party's ideological leadership in literature and art.

In order to strengthen our leadership in literature and art, the writers and artists must establish their own organizations. After this Conference, such an organization of writers and artists must be set up. Such an organization will play an important part in uniting all those active in the fields of literature and art throughout the country so that they will devote all their strength to creating the literature and art of the new China. I am convinced that, after this Conference, the further development of our people's new literature and art will win them a place of glory in the history of China's literature and art.

SOCIALIST REALISM—THE ROAD OF ADVANCE FOR CHINESE LITERATURE[33]

The great works of Soviet literature occupy an important place in the life of the Chinese people and exercise a deep influence on their literature. Soviet literature is a source from which the Chinese people have always drawn confidence, courage and experience for their struggle, both in the days before they had won their liberation and after they achieved victory. Through Soviet literature we see a social order that is the most progressive and finest in the world—a social order such as never existed before and one that means the fulfilment of human happiness. There we find model characters endowed with the noblest human qualities and of the finest moral calibre. The great strength of Soviet literature lies in the fact that it observes and reflects life from the standpoint of communist ideology; it combines the reality of today with the ideals of tomorrow. In other words, its power lies in its method of creation which is that of socialist realism.

33 Originally written for the Soviet magazine *Znamya* of December 1952.

Socialist realism has today become the banner of progressive writers throughout the world. The literature of the Chinese people is also advancing under this banner. Just as China's New-Democratic revolution is a component part of the world proletarian socialist revolution, so the literature of the Chinese people is a component part of socialist-realist literature of the world.

Speaking of the new cultural movement (the May Fourth Movement of 1919),[34] Comrade Mao Tse-tung wrote:

> . . . The May Fourth Movement came into being at the call of the world revolution of that time, of the Russian revolution, and of Lenin. . . . (*On New Democracy.*)

In his work *On People's Democratic Dictatorship,* Comrade Mao Tse-tung defined the significance of the Russian October Revolution for the Chinese people still more profoundly and clearly:

> It was the Russians that introduced the Chinese to Marxism. Before the October Revolution, the Chinese were not only ignorant of Lenin and Stalin but did not even know of Marx or Engels. The salvoes of the October Revolution awoke us to Marxism-Leninism. The October Revolution helped the progressives in China and

34 See footnote 8 on page 24.

throughout the world to adopt the proletarian world outlook as an instrument for studying a nation's destiny and reconsidering their own problems. The conclusion was: "Follow the path of the Russians."[35]

This conclusion, "Follow the path of the Russians," is applicable to literature and art, as well as to the realm of politics.

It is inconceivable that the historic victory in the Chinese people's revolution could have been achieved without the far-reaching influence of the October Socialist Revolution and Soviet assistance; the achievements of the Chinese people's literature today would have been equally impossible, had it not been for the inspiring example set by Soviet literature born of the October Revolution.

Modern Chinese literature has grown on the fertile soil of the realities of Chinese life. It has taken over all that is best in the rich, centuries-old literary heritage of China, and skilfully adapted these traditions to the new tasks of today. We have opposed, and shall continue to oppose, the blind worship of bourgeois literature and art of the West. Chinese literature must have its own particular and distinctive national style, but this national character by no means makes it isolated, narrow or secluded. On the contrary, on the basis of its own national traditions, Chinese

[35] Mao Tse-tung, *On People's Democratic Dictatorship*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1953, p. 5.

literature can and must absorb all that is progressive and useful in world literature.

Throughout its development, Chinese literature has taken note of world literature to enrich itself and raise its own level. Of all foreign works, Russian and Soviet creations have provided particularly rich fare. As early as 1932, Lu Hsun,[36] the greatest of China's writers, spoke, in his essay *I Hail the Literary Ties Between China and Russia,* with gratitude and enthusiasm of the profound influence exerted on the Chinese people by Russian and Soviet literature and the spiritual link which had thereby been forged between the two nations.

Recalling the time when China was first introduced to Russian literature produced during the closing years of the last century, Lu Hsun wrote:

> We learned then that Russian literature was our teacher and friend, for we saw in it the splendid soul of the oppressed, their sufferings, their struggles to achieve freedom. . . . From this literature, we also learnt one great truth: that there are two kinds of people in the world—the oppressors and the oppressed!
>
> This is common knowledge today, a knowledge which nobody questions. But at that time it was a great discovery, comparable to the discovery by primitive man of fire for dispelling the darkness and for cooking his food.

36 See footnote 9 on page 25.

This high evaluation was fully justified, because the penetrating exposure and description of class contradictions and the class struggle in Russian literature were of great help to the Chinese people in their search for a road to liberation; at the same time, such works helped Chinese literature onto the path of revolutionary realism. The positive influence of Russian literature shows strongly throughout Lu Hsun's work from the very beginning. He was the trail-blazer in the popularization of Russian and Soviet literature in China. His translations of Gogol's *Dead Souls* and Fadeyev's *The Nineteen* are works of outstanding quality.

Nearly all revolutionary democratic intellectuals in China, from the very first, have in one way or another come into contact with Russian literature and been powerfully drawn towards it. Russian literature possesses this special power of attraction because it reflects the resolute struggle of the Russian people for mankind's highest ideals against the oppressors and slave-drivers; because it mirrors the Russian people's national character with their love of freedom, their wisdom and their courage.

Pushkin and Gogol, Tolstoy and Turgenev, Chekhov and Gorky—all are as dear to the Chinese reader as are the writers from his own land. The characters in the works of these authors are just as near and dear to us. Although some of the heroes in the Russian classics—as the great Russian critic Dobrolyubov pointed out correctly—did not always have the strength to act, nevertheless, they never rec-

onciled themselves to the ugly reality around them; they strove hard to attain freedom and reach for the light. It was precisely this trait that so powerfully attracted the Chinese progressive and democratic intellectuals of those times and enlightened and inspired them so greatly.

Chinese readers hold Maxim Gorky in higher regard than they do any other foreign author. When we read his *Stormy Petrel* and *The Song of the Falcon,* we sensed Russia's truly revolutionary spirit. In his novel *Mother,* we met for the first time the literary expression of the militant resolution of the Russian working class, a characteristic that sets an example for the world's working class.

Comrade Fadeyev once said: "There is much that is similar in the character of both the Chinese and the Russian peoples." This similarity is without doubt the outcome of similar historical conditions in which the two peoples were forced to wage their long struggle for freedom and national independence. We are very proud of this similarity in the character of the Chinese and Soviet peoples.

The historic victory of the Chinese people has created entirely new conditions for the development and further consolidation of the close literary ties that bind the Chinese and Russian peoples, ties that were so highly praised by Lu Hsun. Soviet literature, Soviet art and Soviet films today are not only examples to be studied by Chinese writers and artists, but also a great moral force for the communist education and

inspiration of China's masses, an indispensable, invaluable and integral part of their new cultural life.

Soviet novels like *The Iron Flood, The Nineteen, Cement, And Quiet Flows the Don, Virgin Soil Upturned, How the Steel Was Tempered, The Young Guard, Days and Nights, The Russian People, The Front* are popular with the Chinese reader. Millions of Chinese readers love the splendid people portrayed in Soviet literature. These people will live for ever in our hearts and Pavel Korchagin, Zoya, Matrosov and Oleg Koshevoi have become the models for countless young men and women in China.

We are especially gratified to see that the literary, artistic and cinematic creations of the new China are well received in the Soviet Union, that their ideological and artistic value is appreciated by Soviet readers and audiences. The presentation of a Stalin Prize in 1951 to Ting Ling for her novel *The Sun Shines over the Sangkan River*,[37] to Chou Li-po for his *Hurricane*,[38] and to Ho Ching-chih and Ting Yi, the playwrights of *The White-haired Girl*,[39] was a great honour not only to these writers and artists, but to the Chinese people as a whole. This was the highest praise for our Chinese writers, but what is more important, a great inspiration and encouragement to them to create still better works.

The growing cultural exchange between China and the Soviet Union is of exceptional importance for the

[37] See footnote 10 on page 25.
[38] See footnote 12 on page 26.
[39] See footnote 11 on pages 25-6.

development of China's literature and art. But the significance of these ties is not limited to the field of literature; it extends to the political sphere. It is a well-known fact that the great friendship of the Chinese and Soviet peoples is the main factor in safeguarding the peace in the Far East and throughout the world. The growth of the cultural exchange between China and the U.S.S.R. is an important factor in the further consolidation of this friendship.

The Chinese people, especially China's writers and artists, are faced with the serious task of even wider popularization of the literature, art and films of the Soviet Union. Our writers and artists must make still greater efforts to learn from the Soviet writers' creative experience and skill and, especially, to make profound study of their creative method: socialist realism.

At present, Chinese literature is not yet fully socialist; it is socialist and revolutionary-democratic, guided by the creative methods of socialist realism. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has clearly pointed out in his work *On New Democracy:*

> Because New-Democratic politics, economy and culture are under the leadership of the proletariat, they all contain a socialist element, which is, moreover, not an ordinary but a decisive element. . . . If there is a socialist element in our politics and economy, then, as its reflection, there will be a socialist element in our national culture.

In judging whether a particular literary work is written in the spirit of socialist realism, the main consideration is not whether it reflects socialist reality, but whether it describes real life in its revolutionary development from a socialist standpoint. Many of our literary works describe the life and struggle of the peasants; for example, the works of Ting Ling and of those who were awarded Stalin Prizes with her; the works of Chao Shu-li,[40] etc. Yet these works cannot be classed as peasant literature or plain revolutionary-democratic literature, but must be classed as literature of socialist realism, because these authors write about the peasants not from the ordinary peasants' or a general, revolutionary-democratic point of view, but from the socialist point of view of the working class. These authors describe the revolutionary struggle waged by the peasants under Communist Party leadership, they show the changes in the peasants' status and in their ideological development by observing the peasants' life through working class eyes. While praising the inexhaustible revolutionary energy of the peasants, they nevertheless criticize all that is conservative and backward in the peasants' ideology and habits. In speaking of the peasants' emancipation, the writers are actually describing the leadership the working class is giving the peasants. In these works, peasant activists and Communists are

[40]Chao Shu-li (1905-) is a writer of many widely-read books reflecting the struggle in the countryside. *Hsiao Erh-hei's Marriage*, *The Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai* and *Changes in Li Village* are the best-known of his works.

not simply peasants but the vanguard of the working class in the countryside. Literary works about the People's Liberation Army and the Chinese People's Volunteers describe the sense of patriotism and internationalism with which the people's fighters are so deeply imbued.

Our country is now entering upon a new historic stage: that of economic construction on a large scale. It is clear that the socialist elements in our political, economic and cultural life will continue to grow. On the industrial front, the working class occupies a position of leadership throughout the country. The great labour enthusiasm of our working class will develop along with its socialist consciousness. In the countryside, the peasants will gradually move in the direction of agricultural producers' co-operatives. Our intellectuals and students are being taught the Marxist world outlook. All these factors together provide a real and growing basis for a socialist-realist literature.

Naturally, China must pass through a period of development to transform herself into a socialist country. Although the socialist sector is the guiding force in the national economy and developing with remarkable speed, China today may still be said to be a country of small producers. The bourgeoisie still exists in China. This fact is reflected in literature where bourgeois and especially petty-bourgeois ideology exerts a deep influence and where, as a result, socialist realism has to wage a fierce struggle against these influences.

Admittedly, Chinese literary works written

according to the principles of socialist realism today are far from being mature. They are still in the process of growth. This is mainly due to the fact that Chinese writers are not sufficiently well versed in Marxism-Leninism, nor sufficiently steeped in the rich experience of life. They also lack a high level of artistic skill. This underlines the urgency and importance of our learning from Soviet literature the use of the socialist-realist method of creation.

What do we want to learn from socialist realism and how are we going to learn it?

Socialist realism demands, in the first place, that the writer be sincere and depict truthfully reality in its revolutionary development. In real life, there are constant contradictions and struggles between what is progressive and developing and what is backward and dying. A writer should give a penetrating picture of these contradictions in life, understand clearly the main tendencies in historical development, vigorously support all that is new and oppose the old. Therefore, in estimating the ideological value of a literary work, we must first decide whether this work exposes the class contradictions in society—reflected even in the minutest details of life in all its aspects, and whether this exposure goes deeply enough. Any attempt to cover up, disguise or gloss over the contradictions of life means a distortion of reality, reduces the ideological militancy of literature and weakens its positive effectiveness.

In the past three years, the Chinese people have achieved great successes in their heroic struggle

against U.S. aggression and in aiding Korea, in the land reform and the other social reforms, as well as in the restoration of their economy and in national construction. We have seen a succession of exemplary workers without number performing heroic deeds on our country's various construction fronts. These should be given first place in our literary description and in our praise. We know that all the successes accomplished in our country under the leadership of Comrade Mao Tse-tung and the Communist Party were achieved only by overcoming many great difficulties. Our heroes and models have all been steeled in the crucible of hard struggle. The Chinese people have to develop large-scale peaceful construction within the country and at the same time continue the struggle against imperialism. Our country must be industrialized and the huge number of scattered small producers must be organized through mutual aid and co-operation. Old ideas and old habits persisting in the people's lives and thoughts must be remoulded in the spirit of socialism. Some of our writers often fail to face and describe these difficulties and contradictions which do, in fact, exist; they do not fully realize that our country's successes can only be described through the toilsome process of overcoming difficulties. Some of our writers have over-simplified and vulgarized the meaning of revolutionary optimism, and their writings create an impression that our successes were achieved without any difficulty. When these writers deal with contradictions in life, they not only do not dare disclose them but even try to gloss them over and blur their

outlines, so as not to make "mistakes." Thus, they describe the turbulent stream of life as peaceful and still, stirred at most by a few ripples.

Fadeyev's novel *The Nineteen* tells of the struggle waged by a guerilla unit in the Civil War. In the end, there remained only nineteen members in the unit but their unconquerable revolutionary will and confidence showed they were the victors. The reader is left not with any feeling of defeatism but, on the contrary, with a stronger sense of revolutionary optimism. The same can be said of Fadeyev's novel *The Young Guard.* As the Chinese saying goes: "Strong wind reveals the strength of the grass." Only in the process of overcoming great difficulties and contradictions is the real power of revolutionary optimism revealed.

To describe the struggle between the forces of the new and the old, a strong, realistic portrayal must be given of the characters representing the new. These characters should be active fighters, capable of changing their environment. It is only through such new heroes that literature educates the masses in the socialist spirit. Generally speaking, our writers are still not adept enough in describing new heroes, though they show greater skill in describing the old type heroes and events of the past. Very often, the new heroes in our literature lack character. Writers frequently describe only the outer trappings of the new life, the general political complexion of the new heroes, without an exhaustive portrayal of their individual character, their thoughts and feelings. This is the

reason why many of our literary works suffer from a lack of vitality, are dry and formalistic. Soviet literature has created an entirely new type of hero, the hero who is building a communist world. Our writers should study this phenomenon seriously.

The most important thing in mastering the principles of socialist realism in Soviet literature today for us is to learn how to describe the contradictions and the struggle between the new and old forces of society, how to create images of the new heroes who personify the high moral calibre and noble qualities of man in the communist society.

In this respect, the works of many outstanding Soviet writers can serve us as examples. Stalin's directives on literature and art; the historic resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on questions of ideology; A.A. Zhdanov's lectures on questions of literature and art; and, finally, the directives on these questions contained in G. Malenkov's report to the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—all these represent the richest and most valuable experience for progressive writers and artists, not only of China but of the whole world, and have given us correct and most important direction.

Our study of Soviet literature will not hinder but help our literature to inherit and further develop our own splendid national traditions. The tradition of realism in Chinese literature has a long history. Revolutionary socialist realism, the mainstream typified by Lu Hsun in the new Chinese literature after

the May Fourth Movement, opened a new era in the history of Chinese literature.

The greatness of Lu Hsun's realism is mainly reflected in his hatred of the dark reaction ruling old China, in his fervent desire and striving for a new China, in his principle of making a sharp distinction between truth and falsehood, and in the strength of his individual loves and hates. In creating Ah Q,[41] Lu Hsun was, on the one hand, in sympathy with this poor human being that was continuously humiliated and insulted while, on the other, he struck sharply at Ah Q's main weakness—his undeveloped class consciousness.

There are many works among the Chinese classics which also describe the social struggle and the character of their heroes realistically. The first great Chinese novel, *Water Margin*,[42] written six hundred years ago, gives a powerful portrayal of the struggle waged by the peasants against the feudal landlords who were, at the same time, the officials. Although the method of this struggle was unavoidably backward and primitive, it nevertheless developed to a high stage, as shown by the ability of the peasant rebels to build

41 Ah Q is the hero of the well-known novel *The True Story of Ah Q* by Lu Hsun. Ah Q is the type who by a curious psychological twist believes he always gets the upper hand from every scrape; he suffers continual oppression, but does not achieve an understanding of the causes of his sufferings. He is executed in the end by the reactionary rulers because, without knowing what revolution means, in a moment of spite, he declares himself to be a revolutionary.

42 See footnote 14 on page 36.

up a base at Liangshanpo,[43] to form an army and establish a government of their own. This novel contains 108 heroes, most of them with distinct personalities. In another great Chinese novel, *Dream of the Red Chamber*,[44] the author created 448 characters, a rare achievement in the history of world literature.

Our present-day literature should continue in the excellent traditions of classical Chinese literature, with its skilful delineation of the struggles and character of its heroes. The new, socialist-realist literature can become a real people's literature only if it absorbs, consciously and critically, the fine traditions of China's national classical heritage.

Thus, we must strive to learn from advanced Soviet literature on the basis of our own national heritage. Following in the footsteps of Soviet literature, New China's literature has taken the path towards socialist realism. We shall advance steadily along this path.

43Liangshanpo is the military base from which the peasants operate, in the novel *Water Margin*.

44 See footnote 16 on page 36.

THE REFORM AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE OPERA[45]

Main Object of the Festival: Learning

At this National Festival of Classical and Folk Drama, in which twenty-three types of drama popular in various parts of the country are represented, nearly a hundred different operas have been staged. A national drama festival on such a large scale is the first of its kind in Chinese history. It has made clear that our rich dramatic heritage needs to be re-evaluated and developed on a new basis. Before us is a veritable treasure-house of art. Although the various types of opera obviously influenced each other in certain ways in the course of their development, they were on the whole cut off from each other, or they deliberately ignored each other. Only now has the situation begun to change; only now have the various types of opera throughout the country begun to learn from each other and develop together in free and friendly competition. The guiding principle laid down by Comrade Mao Tse-tung—"Let all flowers blossom in full glory, create

45 A concluding speech, made on November 14, 1952, at the closing session of the First National Festival of Classical and Folk Drama, in Peking.

the new through the evolution of the old"—most accurately defines the relations of the various types of opera and sets the goal of common endeavour for all. This Festival has provided the various types of opera with an excellent opportunity to learn from each other, and will certainly exercise a great influence on the future development of Chinese opera.

This Festival has displayed not only our great dramatic heritage of past centuries; it has also shown the new achievements of drama reform carried out under the People's Government. Prizes have been awarded to good operas and performances in order to encourage the reform of our dramatic art. These awards show what we approve and what we oppose. We oppose conservatism as well as rash reforms. We stand for correct reforms. We advocate the reform and development of our national drama in accordance with the people's best interests. We are determined to do away with that part of China's dramatic heritage which is reactionary, poisonous and harmful, but to preserve and develop all that is progressive, healthy and beneficial to the people. Instead of recklessly abandoning and destroying our national traditions, we should respect and treasure them. We encourage technical brilliance in artistic creation, because such technical brilliance is the result of long and hard work on the part of the artistes to represent life truthfully. But we are opposed to technique which is formalistic, affected, lifeless.

To learn from our great heritage, to learn from good technique and to learn from the sound experiences

of drama reform—this is the chief function of the present Festival and what gives it significance.

The future is bright for those types of opera which know how to learn, how to absorb the merits of others, and which dare to improve and create; but those which are shackled by their own conventions and thus fail to meet the new needs of the people are doomed to failure.

As the main object of the Festival is to learn, our chief purpose in awarding prizes is to encourage learning from each other. In our evaluations for the awarding of prizes, only those items that have been presented and artistes who have actually taken part in this Festival have received our consideration. For this reason, many deserving plays and actors have missed their chance, simply because they were non-entrants. However, the Festival cannot fail to be of great inspiration to all who work in the dramatic field throughout the country, no matter whether they have taken part and been awarded prizes or not. Chairman Mao Tse-tung, Premier Chou En-lai and other responsible members of the Central People's Government have shown great interest in this Festival; their attendance at performances of the various types of opera should serve as the greatest encouragement to us all, for it testifies to the high hopes reposed in us by the Party and the Government, as well as by the people.

This Festival has been a success. Contests are undoubtedly a good way of fostering the development of the drama. In future, festivals like this will be held every few years. Lack of experience and inadequate

preparation have unavoidably given rise to some flaws. For instance, some important types of opera were not represented and some good actors were not asked to take part, or did not have adequate opportunities to perform; consequently, in the awarding of prizes, we cannot claim to have covered a wide enough range. Then also, the choice and arrangement of items left something to be desired. That a great measure of success has been achieved, these shortcomings notwithstanding, should be credited to the efforts of all the comrades who have taken part in the Festival.

To Serve the Nation and People Still Better Is the Task of All Working in the Dramatic Field

The success of this Festival and the importance the people and the nation attach to it give us no reason for complacency but, on the contrary, greatly increase the responsibility of all those working in the dramatic field. Since drama is an art touching hundreds and thousands of people, what must it do to co-ordinate with the large-scale economic construction and cultural development of this day, so that it can exercise a greater influence upon the people and upon social reform? What must it do to help the Government to give the people the right kind of education—imbuing them with the ideals of patriotism and socialism, establishing new social ethics, raising the people's moral qualities and enriching their spiritual life? For,

if the drama fails to achieve these tasks, it cannot occupy a position of honour in the people's new life.

Since New China came into being, those working in the dramatic field all over the country have made great efforts at reform, in order to adapt opera to the people's new demands. That the work of drama reform has been fruitful is evident from the splendid acting and staging of a number of excellent operas at this Festival. Particularly praiseworthy is the high degree of initiative and patriotism evinced by most of the opera artistes in the reform of the opera during the past three years, in their various socio-political activities and their whole-hearted support of the Communist Party and the People's Government. All this is quite understandable for, in the old society under the rule of the reactionaries, the artistes were subjected to constant persecution and insults, while their art was made the butt for contempt and distortion. The life of many an actor and actress was filled with blood and tears. Therefore, to the stage artistes, the victory of the Chinese people's revolution meant primarily their own emancipation. Instead of being looked down upon, they are respected in the new state, and their art is no longer despised or trampled underfoot but appreciated. The rank-and-file artistes show by concrete action the progress they have made in many fields, and thus justify the people's expectations and high regard.

It is not to be denied, however, that the opera artistes still face many difficulties. Since opera is a product of the old society, we cannot expect it to be

entirely free from feudal dross; but what is important is that the new life of the people demands a new kind of opera. To adapt opera in a better way and more fully to the new society, our reform must be of the right kind and our dramatic creations more numerous. In the old society, most artistes were deprived of the right to education, so that many of them had a low cultural and artistic level and were more or less polluted by the old ways of thinking and old habits. Therefore, the opera artistes have to make the effort to re-educate themselves and raise their standards in order to become new people's artistes, with a new ideology and a new working style and an adequate cultural and artistic level.

The responsibility of the Party and the Government is, primarily, to help these artistes rid themselves of the old ideology and the old working style and replace these by a new ideology and a new working style; to help them attain to a politically, culturally and artistically higher level; to lead them to an understanding of the basic situation and policy of our nation; to urge them to get closer contacts with the people in their daily lives and to understand what the people need; and, finally, to encourage them to undertake the reform of the drama in close collaboration with our new writers and artists. Many Party and Government workers responsible for cultural work in various regions have taken the right attitude towards the artistes and towards drama reform, but there are also quite a few with wrong and inconsiderate attitudes. Instead of trying to establish close, com-

radely and co-operative relations with the artistes in reforming the drama, these cadres have behaved like overlords and bureaucrats. Instead of showing respect for the artistes' technique, they despise it and consider it as backward and something to be eliminated. These cadres see in the artistes only undesirable remnants of the old society; they are blind to the progress these artistes have made and to the fact that they are trying hard to overcome all undesirable vestiges of the past. They have not done what they should have done in reforming the old opera, *e.g.*, arousing the initiative and creativeness of the artistes and relying upon them to carry out the reform; on the contrary, these cadres pride themselves on their own ability and do everything themselves without consulting the artistes. There are even some cadres who treat the artistes in the same way as the feudal lords in the past treated them. The origin of such wrong attitudes can be traced to the cadres' contempt for the nation's artistic heritage, contempt for the people's traditions and contempt for the people's tastes. Until these wrong attitudes are corrected, we will not be able to guide the artistes towards serving the nation and the people better.

Develop the Fine Traditions of Our National Drama! Oppose Conservatism As Well As Impetuosity!

Chinese opera not only has a long history and rich content but has always reflected the people's

spiritual life and has, therefore, been very popular. Handed down to us by the working people or the people's writers and artists of the past, our dramatic heritage is permeated with a realistic spirit and has a strongly popular character. Though the feudal rulers utilized and distorted this heritage in all sorts of ways, our opera is a form of art which possesses a mass character and a democratic foundation to a relatively high degree. Its transmission from age to age has been largely determined by its popularity, and this popularity was not something the feudal rulers could dictate. The people observe the world around them with their own eyes and, from their own experience in life, they bring their imagination and judgement to bear on the historical and legendary tales handed down to them, creating characters that they can admire and love. The people draw a sharp line between their likes and dislikes. In contradistinction to the feudal rulers, the sympathy of the people is always on the side of the oppressed, the insulted, the weak and the good, while hatred and scorn are expressed for oppressors and exploiters who wickedly trample the common man underfoot. The people sing of the brave and the good who fight for their own life and happiness against the forces of oppression. They love selfless characters who have the courage of their convictions; they detest the cowardly and selfish who can be bought. The people are real patriots. They sing the praises of their nation's heroes who defend their country and hate the traitors who turn against their fellow-countrymen. That is why the people are

so fond of characters in Chinese drama like Yueh Fei,[46] the generals of the Yang family,[47] and Hsueh Jen-kuei,[48] and why they dislike Chin Kuai,[49] Pan Hung[50] and Chang Shih-kuei[51] (whether the real Pan and Chang were villains or not is irrelevant); why they are fond of the heroes of *Water Margin* and dislike Kao Chiu[52] and Hsimen Ching;[53] why they sympathize so much with White Snake and Green Snake and loathe Monk Fa Hai.[54] This shows clearly that Chinese

[46]Yueh Fei (1103-1141 A.D.) was a general of the Sung dynasty famed for defeating the invaders and maintaining his country's independence. He was jailed through the treachery of the courtier Chin Kuai and died in prison.

[47]*The Generals of the Yang Family* is a novel about eight brothers who were all warriors during the Sung dynasty in the tenth century A.D. Yang Yeh and his sixth son Yang Yen-chao were real persons.

[48]Hsueh Jen-kuei was a warrior during the Tang dynasty in the seventh century.

[49]Chin Kuai was prime minister of the Emperor Sung Kao-tsung who reigned from 1127 to 1162. Chin Kuai betrayed his country and caused the death of Yueh Fei.

[50]Pan Hung—In the novel, *The Generals of the Yang Family*, he is the villainous official who tries repeatedly to injure the warriors of the Yang family.

[51]Chang Shih-kuei is a mean and cunning general in the novel *Hsueh Jen-kuei Conquers the East.*

[52]Kao Chiu is a character in the novel *Water Margin*, who, from a vagabond, becomes a high official and the bitter enemy of the peasant heroes at Liangshanpo.

[53]Hsimen Ching is another character in the novel *Water Margin*, a local despot who abducts women, and perpetrates many evil deeds in league with officials.

[54]White Snake, Green Snake and Fa Hai are the leading characters in the *Tale of the White Snake*, a folk story that dates back to the Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.). White Snake transforms herself into a beautiful girl; Green Snake also takes human form and becomes her maid. The two fight stubbornly against the monk Fa Hai, who tries to break up the happy

opera, despite its large measure of feudal traits, has never been deprived of its popular character and inherent spirit of realism.

The people have always loved Chinese opera because it has given expression to their lives, their thoughts and feelings, their hopes and wishes, and because of its popular form. In Chinese opera, we are impressed not only by the strong sense of realism, but also by the strong moral force of the people. Chinese opera has been a mirror of the Chinese character and has, in turn, had a certain influence on the development of the nation's character and psychology. The heroes and characters of the opera have influenced the minds of many a generation of Chinese people. However, in speaking of the positive influence of the opera, we must also recognize that it has a negative influence detrimental to our national character. On the one hand, opera has reflected the will and desire of the people in their quest for freedom under the feudal regime, portraying their courage, industry, wisdom and goodness; on the other, we must not forget that the feudal regime utilized the drama as much as possible to make the people resigned and submissive, so that all their virtues might serve to maintain and

marriage between the White Snake and a young mortal by treacherous means. In the end, White Snake is overpowered and imprisoned under Leifeng Pagoda, which used to stand on a hill by the West Lake at Hangchow. When the pagoda crumbled in 1924 due to lack of repairs, superstitious people believed that Green Snake had succeeded in defeating Fa Hai and released White Snake.

consolidate the interests of the feudal rulers. The people are industrious, but the feudal rulers took advantage of their industry to work them to death. The people are brave, but the rulers took advantage of their courage to make them risk their lives in defence of the feudal regime. In the drama popular elements, like grass under a stone, stubbornly find way, if even an indirect one, of coming to the surface; thus, popular and feudal elements are often interwoven in puzzling confusion. A number of operas expose the irreconcilable contradiction between the people and the feudal system but, failing to find the right way out, often resort to a compromise to resolve the contradiction. *The Butterfly Cup*,[55] for instance, is such an opera, and a highly dramatic one at that. The first part is filled with justified resistance to evil and warm sympathy for the working people; but it ends with a cleverly devised love story in which the foe turns out to be the lover and the struggle ends in amity. The revised version of the Shansi opera *The Butterfly Cup* and of the Shensi opera *An Excursion to Turtle Hill*—which forms the first part of the former play—as staged at this Festival showed that such revision was necessary and profitable, although the two operas are still not perfect.

55*The Butterfly Cup* is a famous Shansi opera. A general's son takes a strange fish from an old fisherman. When the fisherman asks for money, he is beaten to death. A young man kills the general's son in revenge for his contempt of the defenceless. The young avenger escapes arrest with the aid of the fisherman's daughter. The two fall in love. The young man gives a butterfly cup to the girl as an engagement gift.

Outstanding among Chinese operas are *Liang Shan-po and Chu Ying-tai*[56] and *The White Snake*,[57] both being genuine masterpieces of the people. At this Festival, the Shaohsing opera *Liang Shan-po and Chu Ying-tai*, the Szechuan opera *In the Shade of the Willow Tree* (which is only another name for *Liang Shan-po and Chu Ying-tai*), *The White Snake*, in the form of both Peking opera and Shaohsing opera, have all been successful in varying degrees as regards both libretto and production. These operas put in strong relief the indomitable will of the Chinese people, particularly of the women, in pursuit of freedom and happiness, and their courage and spirit of self-sacrifice, daring to stand up against ruthless oppressors far stronger than they, with no sign of wavering or compromise, unflinching to the end. We may even say, they conquered death with love. Of course, their victory was gained only in the world of imagination. How could two lovers turn into a pair of butterflies fluttering side by side? How could a woman crushed under the weight of Leifeng Pagoda[58] come to life again? Yet there is truth in these fancies, for they gave the most realistic expression to the people's irrepressible desire for freedom. Is it not precisely such fancies that have inspired generation after generation to struggle stubbornly against the shackles

56See footnote 3 on page 7.

57See footnote 54 on pages 111-2.

58The pagoda bearing the same name that used to stand on a hill by the West Lake at Hangchow is believed to be the Leifeng Pagoda mentioned in the *Tale of the White Snake*.

of the feudal marriage system? Has Leifeng Pagoda not crumbled, after all? The collapse of the pagoda, with its symbolic significance, drew an impassioned piece from Lu Hsun's[59] pen.

In this connection, I would like to explain briefly the difference between superstitious tales and tales from mythology and legend. Both are products of the imagination, both reflect our forbears' primitive view of the world and their belief in supernatural powers. But they signify two different things. Not every tale in which some supernatural force figures should be condemned as superstitious. A great many folk stories take a positive attitude towards the world and are impregnated with a popular character, whereas superstition is always negative and generally serves the interests of the ruling class. This distinction is most clearly seen in the respective treatment of "fate." Folk tales often depict man as unyielding before fate and finally triumphing over it in the world of imagination; superstition, on the contrary, preaches fatalism and retribution, thus leading people to believe that everything is predetermined and that man must resign himself to fate. From the different treatment of "fate," different ideas of the gods naturally follow. In mythology, men dare to hurl defiance at the gods (as for instance, when Monkey[60] rebels against the

[59]See footnote 9 on page 25.

[60]Monkey is the hero of the Chinese novel *Pilgrimage to the West* written in the 16th century. He has supernatural powers and can change himself into a bird, mammal, insect, fish, or plant; into an inanimate thing as well as assume human shape.

Heavenly King or the Cowherd and the Weaving Maid[61] defy the authority of Empress Hsi Wang Mu). Superstition, on the other hand, claims that men are the playthings of the gods, their slaves and victims. Consequently, mythology always encourages man to break away from his enslavement and seek after the life of a real man, while superstition aims at making him a willing slave glorying in his bondage. This is why we oppose superstitious stories, but approve of mythological tales and legends.

We can see that the realism of Chinese opera is in some ways unique. The truthful picture of the harsh reality of feudal society, depicted in Chinese opera, is interwoven with a passionate desire for a happy life in the future and strong confidence in it. Here realism and romanticism combine and, by means of the economy and exaggeration which are both peculiar to Chinese opera, attain a high level of art. This is seen not only in tragedies like *The White Snake* and *Liang Shan-po and Chu Ying-tai,* but also in light comedies like *Autumn River*[62] and *Footsteps in the*

61According to the folk story *The Cowherd and the Weaving Maid,* the poor mortal cowherd (Altair in the constellation Aquila) marries the beautiful Weaving Maid of Heaven (Vega in the constellation Lyra) and they live happily until the Queen of Heaven intervenes and separates them by the Silver River (Milky Way). The young couple are only allowed to meet once a year on the seventh day of the seventh moon, on which day, magpies form a bridge for them to cross the river and meet.

62*Autumn River*—An old boatman sympathizes with the secret love of a nun for a young student. He finally rows her down the river to join her lover, but first dallies to tease her until the girl is nearly frantic with impatience.

Snow[63] in Szechuan opera and *Ko Ma*[64] in Hupeh opera, which admirably blend the wit, humour and warm feelings of the people. (*Autumn River* and *Footsteps in the Snow* are scenes from the classical dramas *Story of the Jade Hair-Pin* and *Betrothal at the Ceremonial Stand* respectively, and can be staged independently.)

It is no accident that Chinese drama has attained such a degree of realism. During the nearly seven hundred years from its golden age—the Yuan dynasty (1280-1368)—down to the present, Chinese drama has been constantly supplemented, revised, and enriched by the people's creative inventiveness. The existing types of Chinese opera have all developed from popular plays. Although Peking opera formerly was staged at the court, it retained its popular foundation and remained close to the people's hearts. It is common knowledge that, in the process of its formation and development during the middle of the Ching dynasty (1644-1911), Peking opera drew upon several types of local drama of that period, such as Anhwei and Shensi operas, and absorbed the essence of Kunshan opera. In content, language and music, however, Peking opera

63*Footsteps in the Snow*—A poor scholar suspects his wife of infidelity when he sees footsteps in the snow near the cave, which is their home, in the desolate wilds. The starvation they are suffering makes this suspicion an agony that drives the scholar to bitter reproaches. After some deliberate hesitation, his wife tells him, however, that the footsteps were those of her mother's servant who had brought provisions.

64*Ko Ma*—Ma To, who has suddenly become rich, intends to break his daughter's engagement to a poor student. Ko Ma, the servant of Ma To and cousin of the student, helps the young man secure his love by various ingenious means.

is closer to the people than Kunshan opera, and that is why it replaced the latter and dominated the stage for many years, completing an important reform in the history of modern Chinese drama. In both music and acting, Peking opera surpasses all other types of local drama: It can reflect historical themes more comprehensively and give a many-sided portrayal of a variety of characters in different stations in life. Its qualitative improvement, however, was achieved under the limitations of the feudal society, and this resulted in a tendency for the opera to divorce itself from the people, giving rise to formalism in certain respects. This was not the case with the various types of local folk opera which were richer in popular sentiment, and closer to the life and language of the people; consequently, they are more vivid and lively in content and have a fresher and freer form.

For the past several years, many types of local opera, particularly the Shaohsing opera and *Ping Chu*, have introduced many innovations that deserve our attention. It is only natural that many of them have won great acclaim from the masses at this Festival. Peking opera should once again absorb the nourishment it needs from the various types of local opera, thus invigorating itself and breaking through the barriers which hamper its development, to attain a new and higher level in the service of the people. Like the other forms of folk art, local opera in its various forms, particularly the simple varieties of folk drama, is noted for its naturalness. But, as it is not free

from monotony and crudity, it must strive for improvements.

In feudal China, dramatic art reached its climax with the development of Peking opera, and then entered upon a period of stagnation, unable to make any further advance. Although Peking opera continued to produce many talented artistes, they blazed no new trail. Although popular opera continued to grow and develop in some parts of the country, it was in large measure allowed to shift for itself. This state of stagnation had deep-rooted social causes. The feudal ruling class helped develop Peking opera from various types of regional opera, but did not give it anything really positive. Because the bourgeoisie was culturally even more backward than politically and affected by feudal and compradore ideology, it never exercised any independent or positive influence on the development of China's dramatic art. What is worse, through the evil influences of the commercial and compradore circles, certain types of opera lost their national traditions; art was turned into a commodity, seeking after novelty and catering to the vulgar tastes of the petty bourgeoisie; it was thus led down the road to ruin. Kwangtung opera, for instance, has been travelling this dangerous path. It has made some creative contributions, so far as music is concerned, and has also introduced some daring innovations in stagecraft; but artistically its tendency is far from healthy. The playwrights write their libretti carelessly, making sensational plots their chief concern. It has become a rule to have six main characters in every Kwangtung

opera, and all the characters vie with one another in strangeness of costume. This is no art; in fact, it is the negation of art. Many of the artistes in Kwangtung opera are talented, creative and patriotic. They should do away with these bad practices and try to breathe new, healthy life into Kwangtung opera in keeping with the people's new needs and a truly artistic development.

The Chinese working class has inherited the entire cultural legacy (including the dramatic heritage) bequeathed to us by past generations. But because the Chinese people's revolution continued for a long time under rigorous conditions of war, we could not gather and assess this heritage comprehensively and systematically, to develop it on a new basis. Our work in the past was chiefly concerned with the utilization of simple forms of our national arts, such as the *yangko*[65] dance, forms that could immediately reflect the realities of life as a weapon in the struggle. But, now that the people have become the masters of the country, they should shoulder the responsibility of reforming and developing our dramatic art. Only if guided by the advanced ideology of the working class can Chinese opera find the path to real reform and development for a new lease of life and a greater future.

In his work *On New Democracy,* Comrade Mao Tse-tung correctly pointed out:

65 See footnote 28 on page 62.

> . . . To clarify the process of development of this ancient culture, to throw away its feudal dross and to absorb its democratic essence is a necessary condition for the development of our new national culture and for the increase of our national self-confidence; but we should never absorb anything and everything uncritically. We must separate all the rotten things of the ancient feudal ruling class from the fine ancient popular culture that is somewhat democratic and revolutionary in character. . . .

Basically, Chinese dramatic art is part of this people's culture. Therefore, we Communists must treat this heritage with care and seriousness, approving neither an off-hand belittling of our heritage and arbitrarily making changes in it, nor the conservative refusal to take a critical view of our heritage and any reform of it. Some of our drama reformers have taken great liberties with the libretti of our old operas, and modified the characters and the historical reality of these operas with inadequate knowledge, often according to personal taste. Such people are not improving our traditions but destroying them; they are ignorant of the fact that our dramatic heritage is the creation of the working people of all ages and the spiritual wealth of the nation. To scorn tradition means to scorn the people and to have no love for one's country. This is an intolerable attitude, to be regarded as most harmful in the reform of our drama, an attitude that requires immediate correction.

Give True Expression to the People's New Life! Create Historical Plays with a New and Correct Viewpoint!

Our dramatic heritage reflects the people's life in the past. But the people's new life, too, demands dramatic presentation. Therefore, the immediate task of playwrights is to use various forms of drama for expressing the new life of the people appropriately and not stiffly, unnaturally; this is a serious, creative task, requiring a long time for completion. The masses are thirsting for the dramatic expression of their new life; consequently, local drama troupes that produce such operas almost always win great applause. The *Ping Chu* and Shanghai opera, and numerous other types of local drama, have shown themselves quite capable of picturing the new life; we are therefore glad that prizes have been awarded to the *Ping Chu The Little Son-in-law* and the Shanghai opera *Arhat Coin.* The libretti and performances of both these operas must be considered successful. Both paint a true picture of the irrational marriage practices that still exist in the new villages; but there is no longer any trace of the tragedy of marriage so often described in old operas. Instead, we see the complete triumph of the new and progressive over the old and backward. On the other hand, neither of these two works can be said to be free from defects in their method of creation. In *The Little Son-in-law,* the first part which depicts the heroine Hsiang Tsao and the circles in which she moves as so progressive, makes

the second part, in which she is forced into marriage with a mere child, hardly credible. The composition lacks unity and truthfulness in the delineation of characters and social environment. In *Arhat Coin,* there are many vivid descriptions of characters and environment, but the treatment of the changes that take place in the characters as the story progresses seems affected and unconvincing. Two other operas may be mentioned: The *Ping Chu A Woman Teacher* and the *Chu-yi*[66] opera *New Ways for Doing New Things* are both good in so far as they deal with new persons and new life in the rural districts. Yet, owing to serious defects in plot and characterization, neither has succeeded in doing justice to its theme, despite the actors' endeavour to make the performance a brilliant one. *A Woman Teacher* is loose in dramatic development because the playwright, instead of concentrating on the presentation of the selfless, conscientious attitude of the teacher to her educational work, has described her as someone busying herself with agricultural production tasks and social activities outside her school. The opera merely catalogues a number of the problems in rural life, without giving a true picture of that life today. In many places it is the playwright who is talking, instead of the characters speaking for themselves. *New Ways for Doing New Things,* too, wanders away from its theme in super-

[66] *Chu-yi* opera was only recently developed from various types of folk songs sung in Peking and Tientsin. With its robust, lively and varied style of singing it has been successful in presenting modern life.

fluous details on agricultural production, giving the impression that the sole purpose of the new kind of marriage is to practise economy and increase agricultural production. The personal traits of the characters and their dialogue are abstract and unreal. All these flaws in works depicting village life are due to the failure to probe into and expose the complex class contradictions in the countryside and the way in which they manifest themselves in the lives, thoughts and customs of the people.

The criticism I have just made is by no means intended to create the impression that all these operas presented at this Festival which have as their theme the new life are worthless. On the contrary, I should say that they are all on the right lines, and the staging of quite a number of them has been excellent. I should say, too, that their success or failure calls for our serious attention and deserves to be summed up carefully. The people are looking forward to the appearance of every new dramatic creation with great expectations. We want more and better plays. Realism demands of our dramatists the truthful, and not fancied, representation of life; it requires of them the creation of flesh-and-blood characters. This is precisely what our new playwrights should learn from our excellent traditions—how to throw into relief the many contradictions in the central characters and events so as to give them full expression.

If we want our drama to present the new life of the people, we must also give careful consideration to the contradictions that may arise between the existing

forms of the various types of opera and the new content they are called upon to represent. Consequently, it becomes necessary to reform the various types of opera on their present basis. As the first step towards this end, we should sort out and preserve all that is excellent or comparatively good in the old dramatic repertoire, weed out the feudal elements from its content and develop its popular character. Improvements must also be made in the accompanying art forms, be it music or acting, to enrich and enhance the power of portraying reality. Then, in accordance with the different development of the various types of opera, those most suitable for the presentation of modern life should be given the opportunity to develop along this line; others that are appropriate merely for the presentation of historical and legendary themes should be guided gradually to portray modern life; but this change should not be effected immediately, because it would mean a loss in original merit and characteristic flavour. Undue haste and crude handling would be harmful.

Most of the Chinese operas, particularly Peking opera, are suited to portray historical themes; it is incumbent upon us, therefore, to create new historical plays from a new and correct viewpoint.

We have the greatest interest in the history of our own country and in the illustrious feats and achievements of our forefathers, particularly in the last hundred years of our revolutionary history. Our new drama should observe and judge historical events and personalities from the working-class point of

view. It should help the people to differentiate historical figures who aided the progress of history and stood by the people, from those who impeded this progress and oppressed and exploited the people. All too often, the people's own history has been distorted and given a wrong twist in the old drama. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has pointed out clearly: "The true creators of history are the people, but on the old stage it was the gentry and their wives, sons and daughters who ruled, while the people were regarded as mere scum of society." Thus, the mission of new historical drama creations is to restore its true character to history and to show that the people are the real makers of history. Moreover, the former historical drama consists mostly of tales about emperors and kings, their generals and ministers, and is concerned with the remote past, or even ancient times. Of the hundred years from the Opium War to the present, in which the greatest changes have taken place in China's history, scarcely a trace can be found in our drama. It is quite evident, therefore, that the subject-matter and material for creative efforts in the historical drama field should henceforth come from modern history.

Whether it is a question of giving expression to modern or ancient life, the highest principle in art is truthfulness. Historical truth allows of no distortion, no concealment or whitewashing. However, those who oppose historical truthfulness, like Comrade Yang Shao-hsuan, seem incapable of understanding this

fundamental principle. They think that, for subjective revolutionary propaganda purposes, they may falsify history at will, without any regard for objective historical truth. They fail to grasp the fact that attempts to describe historical figures as if they possessed a modern working-class ideology are something quite different from viewing history and writing about it in the light of modern working-class ideology.

Heroes in history deserve our praise. But it must not be forgotten that none was free from the limitations imposed by the circumstances of the age in which he lived. Hence, no comparison can be made between their progressiveness and greatness and that of persons of our present-day, advanced working class. But the anti-historicists go to all lengths to give the heroes of the past the likenesses of the heroes of our day. And, in no few instances, they even paint as heroes people who were not heroic at all.

In order to learn from the errors committed in history, we may criticize the mistakes made by historical personages. However, in making such criticisms, it is important that we take into consideration the concrete historical conditions amidst which the figures in question lived, and not present-day conditions. The anti-historicists almost always use our present-day standards to judge people of the old days; they heap undeserved blame upon their heads and, even, compel them to criticize themselves! This is another example of the all-too-common tendency to "modernize" and "idealize" historical characters.

We respect mythological tales because, in them, we find mirrored both the naive views our forbears had of the world and their visions of happiness in future ages. Nevertheless, the anti-historicists are stubbornly determined to turn old legends into reflections of present-day struggles. And so, for the simple reason that the dove is the symbol of the peace for which the people of the whole present-day world are struggling, doves have taken the place of magpies forming the bridge in *The Cowherd and the Weaving Maid*. One playwright has gone even further: he makes the magpies symbolize peace; the old ox that ploughs the field stands for a tractor; and Harry S. Truman, airplanes and tanks are all crammed onto the stage!

The main trouble with anti-historicism is that it attempts to make the people believe in lies and absurd fabrications, instead of endeavouring to arm them with truth. Instead of leading the people forward, it attempts to pull them backward. Instead of fostering a new sense of patriotism among them, it attempts to engender narrow nationalism.

We condemn distortions of history in the old drama, at the same time we oppose the anti-historicists who make fresh, anti-Marxian, attempts at the distortion of history. This is an ideological struggle we must wage for the creation of new historical drama.

The task of writing new scripts on modern life or historical themes is one that calls for true authors and poets. Great is our age, rich our history. We need more men like Kuan Han-ching, Ma Chih-yuan and

Wang Shih-fu[67] to usher in the new age of drama we are so eagerly anticipating.

Create a New National Opera on the Basis of Our National Drama Tradition!

The chief problem in reforming the drama lies in the writing of scripts because all dramatic activity is based on that. In the creation of a new opera, music is equally important.

There are many different forms of Chinese opera, most of them the products of a long historical development. Consequently, while each possesses national traits common to all, it has at the same time distinct regional characteristics, owing to the differences in local dialect and folk music. Each different type of opera should, in accordance with its own special features and needs, absorb the good points of other types, in order to enrich itself and advance to a higher level.

Our new composers and musicians should take an active part in the reform of the opera. They should make a serious study of the music in Peking opera and other types of opera, and improve our musical instruments, musical composition and styles of singing with proper reference to the modes of European classical music, and particularly to the modes of contemporary

[67]Kuan Han-ching, Ma Chih-yuan and Wang Shih-fu were well-known as dramatists in the 13th century, during the Yuan dynasty.

Soviet music. This will impart greater vigour to Chinese opera in its presentation of the new life and prepare the way for closer ties between Chinese operatic music and music in other parts of the world. This is a creative task which certainly cannot be accomplished overnight or by the efforts of a few. First of all, our new musicians and composers should help musicians in the various types of opera in their musical studies, to improve both their technique and the music to be played.

When we consider the sum total of each of the various types of opera, Chinese operatic music is really quite rich. But, taken by itself, the power of expression of each type, particularly the power of presenting the new life, is poor and inadequate. Numerous actors of renown in Chinese opera, especially in Peking opera, have contributed many distinctive and original features to vocal music. Wei Liang-fu, the creator of Kunshan opera, has undoubtedly made some of the greatest contributions to the development of operatic music and, especially, to operatic singing. Many stage musicians have also done much to raise the standard of their performance and to improve their instruments. Taken as a whole, however, Chinese operatic music has undergone no radical renovation. Stage musicians have not held a sufficiently respected position, nor has their function been developed. Hence, they have not yet been able to play an important role in advocating the reform of our opera. Their forces, which are indispensable to the reform and development

of operatic art, should be mobilized and every assistance given them to raise their artistic level.

A new type of opera represented by *The White-haired Girl*[68] has come to take its place beside Peking opera and the various other types of local opera in present-day China. This new type of opera was created after the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art[69] by the new musicians who, in order to present the life and struggle of the working people, used folk songs and folk operatic music as a basis, at the same time drawing upon the best and most advanced elements in foreign music. This new type of opera is still young and immature; but because it answers the people's demand for new dramatic content and contains a number of quite good compositions, it has been warmly welcomed by the masses. It deserves recognition as a new form of national opera, a form which should be encouraged, supported and developed. However, this new type of opera has not yet drawn deeply enough upon the rich legacy of national drama which is a prerequisite to future development. At present, this new type of opera exerts far less influence upon the masses than do the original types of Chinese opera. Meantime, the latter are gradually being reformed so that some of them actually differ very little from the new opera in their presentation of the new life. Hence, the creators of new operatic works should study the existing types of Chinese opera

[68] See footnote 11 on pages 25-6.

[69] See footnote 6 on page 17.

thoroughly, so as to free themselves resolutely and thoroughly from their erroneous contempt for our national dramatic heritage. We must realize that to talk about creating new operas that are not based on our national music traditions will lead to the absurdity of repudiating these traditions. Only after our new musicians and dramatists have familiarized themselves through study with our national drama heritage, shall we have a true and firm foundation on which to create new operas. Any other method would be illusory and without a future.

Chinese histrionic art is remarkable for its integration of singing, acting and dancing. Chinese opera, and particularly Peking opera, can boast of a long line of talented performers, from Cheng Chang-keng to Mei Lan-fang, who have created many different characters of the stage. Their styles of acting are one of the most important and precious parts of our drama heritage which we should treasure and develop as it deserves. On the other hand, this heritage contains backward, formalistic and naturalistic elements which are a hindrance to our dramatic art and ought to be gradually reformed. There are also certain features of the Chinese stage that distort life and injure art; these should be gradually and continuously eradicated. But, in the course of reform, every detail should be carefully considered and repeated tests made. The use of curtains to conceal the property-man at work, for instance, although a mere detail, requires much study and experiment for a satisfactory solution because it has a direct bearing

on the performance. The "face designs,"[70] too, must undergo a proper reform and not simply be abolished. The first and principal step, however, is to make changes in the symbolism and designs that express contempt for the working people and the nationalities of China or glorify horror and superstitions. Other reforms, *e.g.*, of stage designs and costumes, will require the careful attention and planning of the experts in these fields. In the reform of staging and acting, we must reject impatient and harsh methods; on the other hand, we must also oppose any conservative refusal to reform.

Only by the comprehensive but gradual reform of the various types of drama can we succeed in our aim to "let all flowers blossom in full glory, create the new through the evolution of the old."

[70]Face designs—On the Chinese stage, coloured designs are painted on the actors' faces to denote their character (villain or hero, etc.) and emotions.

ON THE WORKS OF CHAO SHU-LI

Great changes have been taking place in the wide rural areas that are already liberated. An intense and complex struggle has been going on between the peasants and the landlords. During the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression, the Communist Party launched a movement in the countryside for the reduction of land rents and interest payments; this movement did much to improve the peasants' living standards. It also demonstrated the peasants' revolutionary enthusiasm and helped to organize the forces of the Chinese people for the struggle against imperialism. Since our victory over Japan, the fight for lower rents and interest payments has been continuing, combined with the mass struggle to punish traitors and rapacious landlords, a struggle that will end only when the remnant forces of feudalism in the countryside are eradicated and the peasants completely liberated. In the eight years of war against Japanese aggression, the peasants became more united and class-conscious than ever before. They now recognize the actual causes of their poverty, and are determined to fight for the removal of these causes. Very aptly, they call mass meetings to settle accounts with the landlords, "digging up the roots of poverty," meaning that they will destroy these very roots. The bound-

less and, therefore, irresistible revolutionary strength of the peasants is being brought into full play to effect elemental changes in the countryside, as well as in the rest of China; at the same time, the peasants themselves are being transformed in this upheaval. This is the greatest change in our country today—the change from an old to a new China.

This tremendous change in the countryside demands expression in works of art and literature. The writings of Chao Shu-li meet this demand to a large extent.

Chao Shu-li is a new writer, but one with considerable experience in writing and life, a serious thinker who had matured before he became well-known. He is an artist from the people who has created a new, popular style. His first short story *Hsiao Erh-hei's Marriage*, published in 1943, gained immediate recognition among the masses—in the revolutionary base in Taihang Mountains alone, thirty to forty thousand copies were sold—while the story was dramatized and put on the stage by the people themselves. Soon after, his *Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai* was published. This book, in its vivid and truthful description of the peasants' struggle, can be considered a masterpiece. Quite recently, Chao Shu-li published a novel on the same theme, entitled *Changes in Li Village.*

These three works give us a magnificent picture of the great changes that have shaken up the countryside.

Hsiao Erh-hei's Marriage tells a rural love story.

Its plot is simple enough: Hsiao Erh-hei, a handsome young peasant who is a crack shot, loves the beautiful Hsiao Chin; however, his father and her mother, the two soothsayers of the village who are feared for their witchcraft, oppose the match. Hsiao Erh-hei's father is raising an eight or nine-year-old girl as his son's bride, but Hsiao Erh-hei says: "If you want to keep her, all right. But I'll have nothing to do with her." Hsiao Chin also objects to the marriage which her mother has arranged for her; she throws the engagement gifts on the ground and says to her mother, "I won't have it! Whoever accepts this junk must marry the man herself!" Both lovers are firm in their refusal. Caught with Hsiao Chin by the village bullies, Chin Wang and his brother who try to intimidate them, Hsiao Erh-hei shows no sign of fear. He knows he has right on his side, for he has consulted the cadres in the district government who told him, "Any couple can apply for a marriage certificate if both are agreed. No third party can interfere." In the end, Hsiao Erh-hei triumphs of course. Here, the author is not merely celebrating the victory of a principle: that of free choice in marriage; he is celebrating the victory of the new society, a society in which the peasant can love whom he likes. He is singing the victory of the peasantry, now masters of their own fate who are learning to fight for a better life. He is singing the victory of enlightened, progressive elements among the peasantry over the ignorant, backward and superstitious elements. Last but not least, he is singing the triumph of the peasants

over the feudal power of village despots. The author's characterization of the two old people is quite satirical, but when we see these two soothsayers put to shame because they opposed their children's marriage, we cannot help pitying them a little; when, later, we see them gradually change their outlook, we even begin to like them, for the author's object is to attack the local despots like Chin Wang and his brother.

The *Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai* develops the theme of struggle between the peasants and the landlords. The struggle centres on two problems: election of the political administration in the village and reduction of land rent. Old Yen, whom the author portrays as a typical landlord—sly and treacherous—has usurped the village administration and manipulates the activities of the anti-Japanese association in the village. Li Yu-tsai has composed the following rhyme to describe him:

Yen Heng-yuan is a very strong mayor.
Ever since we had one it was Yen.
Ten years, every year we vote for a betrayer;
Who do you think the mayor is then?
I suggest a great big stamp of wood
That a voter should be pretty proud to hold.
It would save a lot of trouble; it would last; it would be good
To make a mayor every year till Yen is cold.

Li Yu-tsai, the village songster, uses his rhymes

to reflect village affairs and characters and to express the peasants' reactions. These rhymes tell the true situation naturally and trenchantly. Because they tear the disguise from Yen and others of his ilk, Li Yu-tsai is driven out of the village. The active elements among the peasants are attacked, split up or bribed. A young and enthusiastic but inexperienced cadre by the name of Chang, is taken in because he is subjective and bureaucratic to the point where he considers Yen one of the "enlightened gentry" and praises the village as a "model village." However, the peasants see things clearly, and they sing:

Whether "model" or not, in our village
The rich eat wheat cakes; and the poor thin gruel.

So the struggle goes on. Little Yuan becomes corrupted, but other "little" people remain active. Li Yu-tsai has been driven out of the village, but others continue to make rhymes and cannot be silenced. Comrade Yang, chairman of the county peasants' association who comes from among the masses and, therefore, understands their needs, draws all the young peasant activists in the village round him like a magnet. They reorganize the peasants' anti-Japanese association and the village administration, carry into effect the decree concerning the reduction of land rents and win their struggle. The author here deals correctly with the theme of struggle in the countryside with its difficulties and complexities. He depicts different characters in the village: the treacherous and cunning

landlords, the peasants—some active, some backward and some neither one nor the other—and cadres of differing working styles. He simplifies neither the characters nor the events, writing about the difficulties as well as successes, and showing us the dark together with the bright side. His pen is light and full of humour, and yet serious and passionate. The governing factor in his writings is always that which is bright and nascent.

Changes in Li Village also centres around the struggle between the peasants on the one side, and the local despots and landlords on the other. Since the novel treats a wider field and longer period, the struggle is more fierce and cruel. While the two earlier works were in a humorous vein, this novel's tone is serious. The hero of the novel, Tieh-so, is a more determined character than the "little" people of the earlier works. As he is more experienced, he acts more purposefully. The story develops around Tieh-so, an outsider in Li Village, badly exploited and oppressed by the local landlords and despots, unable to free himself from their clutches. Only when he meets by chance a young Communist called Little Chang at Taiyuan, does a new light dawn on his life. He and later all the villagers virtually come to idolize Little Chang. At the outbreak of the war against Japanese aggression, Little Chang happens to be sent to this county to work and, coming to Li Village, he organizes a vigorous Sacrifice League there. Tieh-so and other progressive peasants like Leng-yuan and Pai-kou become very active, while Landlord Li and his gang try

to tighten their control, hoping to prevent the reduction of rents and interest and to render the League powerless. With the Kuomintang and the Japanese in power, the reactionaries take their bloody revenge on the peasants. Little Chang is buried alive; Tieh-so and Leng-yuan manage to run away and join the Eighth Route Army. By the time the Eighth Route Army liberates this village again, less than half of the villagers are left. The struggle is cruel and protracted. The author might have ended the story with the celebration of victory over Japanese imperialism; but he adds a final scene in which fighters are sent off to the front to resist the Kuomintang's bandit-like troops, emphasizing the fight that is still ahead. Thus he fills his readers with confidence in the ultimate victory and courage to face the struggle.

Though *Changes in Li Village* depicts happenings in one village, it reflects the whole struggle of the people that took place in Shansi Province during the War of Resistance. We see what a big task the author has set himself. However, herein the novel has not fully achieved its purpose, falling short of the perfection achieved in the two earlier works. But when we consider its scope and theme, this novel stands in a class apart from the earlier works.

After a review of these three works by Chao Shu-li, I would like to speak on certain of his special features that deserve our study. I shall group them under two headings: characterization and language.

The first thing we notice in his characterization is that all the persons he describes play definite parts in

the struggle, and develop in its course. Every psychological change is determined by the change of each character's position in the struggle and the change in relationships between him and others. The characters are never drawn as static or passive.

First and foremost, Chao Shu-li has depicted progressive peasants and cadres in the frontline of the fight. The creation of typical, positive characters is a great and difficult task because, first of all, almost all of our best writers in the past dealt with the passive and backward aspects of the peasantry, and, secondly, because in our society personalities of a new type are still in the process of formation and growth. Although the author has not yet created a type as highly representative as Ah Q,[71] he has definitely succeeded in depicting truthfully some characters of the new society. The "little" people in the *Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai,* who can be considered as the collective image of the new peasantry, are lifelike and lovable. But Chao Shu-li does not try to idealize them. They are just ordinary peasants, young and hot-headed, sometimes to the point of recklessness. The exploitation and oppression they suffer at the hands of the local despots and landlords forces them to turn to revolution. They grow up amid suffering and struggles, and gradually learn how to use tactics and strategy. They have great courage and an always ready wit and humour. In the struggle, each displays his individual talent; it is as Comrade Yang says in the *Rhymes of*

71 See footnote 41 on page 101.

Li Yu-tsai: "There are plenty of capable men right here in the Ash-tree Grove." The mass struggle is the force that determines everything. It is this mass struggle that has educated the peasantry, and raised the progressive elements from its ranks. The works of Chao Shu-li reflect the wisdom, strength and revolutionary optimism of the peasantry as a whole, while in Comrade Yang he has successfully drawn the personality of an outstanding peasant cadre.

The author is equally successful in his description of local despots, landlords and their lackeys. He focuses attention on their conflict with the peasants and the new government. They stubbornly resist the peasants' activities—demands for the reduction of rent, organization of peasants' associations and reorganization of the village administration. When despots and landlords cannot openly use brute force, they resort to cunning and treachery. "They are full of dirty tricks." In the effort to maintain their rule, they take every advantage of the peasants' greed and backwardness and the cadres' subjectivism, bureaucracy and inexperience. The chapter in the *Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai* on measuring the land describes this superbly.

The line between the peasants and the landlords is very clearly drawn. By class instinct and experience, the peasants know the difference very well. For instance, when Yuan is an activist, the "little" people respect him very highly, but when he allows himself to be bought over by the landlord and becomes captain of the village militia, they shrink from him. Their

attitude changes completely because their feelings towards him now are quite different. A quotation from the talk between two peasants ordered to hoe the land for Little Yuan will show this change:

> "The first time we hoed his field because we wanted to. Now he orders us to do it!"
>
> "The first time was different. Then we all saw him off, and were glad to help him. Now he's an 'official'! He doesn't want to hoe his land, he orders us around. If we'd known he was going to turn out this way, we wouldn't have helped him. It would have been better to spend the time sleeping!"

In the *Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai,* the author also describes backward peasants like Old Chin who was "poor all his life, and squeezed by the landlord so that he's afraid to open his mouth, yet he looks down on anybody else who's poor." However, he had one good point: "Old Chin never argued with a young man. He sat silent and made no reply," for he was not a bad person at heart. Even backward people must change in the struggle. Not only Old Chin, but even the two soothsayers practising witchcraft in *Hsiao Erh-hei's Marriage* begin to change towards the end. Some may think the change too slight or rather negative, but the author is a realist: he cannot transform a character overnight as some writers do. He emphasizes the importance of environment; therefore, although he does not tell us exactly to what extent his

characters have changed, we are convinced that they must have changed.

Another good point in Chao Shu-li's characterization is that the people he describes show what they think and feel through their words and actions. He seldom gives lengthy descriptions of his characters, seldom introduces them himself, and seldom indulges in flowery descriptive passages. His characters are drawn from life. They are not "petty bourgeoisie dressed in the clothes of workers, peasants or soldiers." His peasants are real peasants. They act as peasants act, and speak as peasants speak. Everything about them is natural, simple and clear; there is nothing artificial or affected. Moreover, the peasants' real feelings are delineated with a minimum of actions and words. Here is another passage from the *Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai*, showing how the peasants react to the news of the dismissal of their village mayor:

> As they came in the door, Little Yuan cried. "Big news! Big news!"
>
> "What's up?" asked Li Yu-tsai.
>
> "The mayor Yen Hsi-fu has been kicked out!" (He was the nephew of Yen Heng-yuan and had been mayor of the village since its liberation.)
>
> Little Shun jumped down from the *kang* and shouted, "Really? We should celebrate the new year three more days!"
>
> "Count me in!" said Little Fu.
>
> "Has it really happened?" mused Li Yu-tsai.

"I thought he was a permanent fixture. Who told you about it?"

"It's true all right," replied Little Yuan. "Political Worker Chang brought the order of dismissal from the county government."

Little Fu's cousin was puzzled:

"Why do you people hate Hsi-fu so?"

This short dialogue, which reads so easily and pleasantly, expresses the force of the peasants' hatred for local despots and landlords. This hatred explodes like a bomb in *Changes in Li Village.* Some readers may think the peasants' vengeance too cruel in the bloody scene when Landlord Li, the traitor, is beaten to death in Dragon King Temple. But let us listen to what the peasants say:

> Do you call this swimming with blood? That day they were killing us, blood from the temple was running out along the gutters!

Their action was entirely proper and fair. Since these peasants are active and progressive people, their words are always consistent with their deeds. Their language expresses action and is formed in action; thus, what they say is always terse and vivid. The language of the struggle and the language of daily life are one and the same. Tempered in the flames of struggle, peasant wit and humour assume a bright sparkle. They call their sarcasms "mind-openers" or "brick-throwing." That is to say, they "throw

bricks" at the landed gentry, officials, despots and their lackeys. This is the language of struggle, and it is through such words and actions that the author outlines the new character of his cast.

Another feature of Chao Shu-li's characterization is the clear expression of a definite relationship between himself and his characters. He does not stand outside the struggle, but is right in the midst of it, among the peasants, as one of them. He does not observe and describe the peasants as if he were a bystander, or as if they were far beneath him. He expresses the peasants' mentality and sentiments truthfully, basing his description and narrative on their feelings, reactions and judgements. He never writes about things beyond the peasants' daily life, or understanding or about things that cannot interest them. (Of course, when he writes on another subject, it is a different matter.) His main criterion in his observations and descriptions is the reaction of the masses to different individuals or incidents. No one knows more about the countryside and the landlords than the peasants themselves. The peasants are also the best judges of the village cadres' work. Mass opinion is always right. The "rhymes of Li Yu-tsai" which reflect the views of the masses faithfully may seem, on the surface, to be variations on the explanatory verses characteristic of traditional Chinese novels; however, in my opinion, they are the reflection of the mass outlook which is such an important factor in Chao's writing. Only with such an outlook can an

author truly combine the methods of realism with a popular viewpoint.

Some people may suspect that Chao Shu-li is merely a "peasant writer" whose writing and thoughts are reduced to the level of "peasant mentality." This is not at all the case. He not only praises what is positive and progressive in the peasants, but also criticizes them for their negative and backward traits. He depicts good cadres who make the leadership of the proletariat in the village possible, without which the peasants' liberation would have been impossible; at the same time, he criticizes bad cadres. The chief criterion for distinguishing between good and bad cadres is whether they can take the same stand as the peasants and solve their problems on this basis. This is what makes the difference between Comrade Yang and Comrade Chang. The contrast between these two characters is drawn realistically and filled with educational significance.

From Chao Shu-li's method of characterization I shall pass to his genius for language.

His language is the effortless, rich language of the masses, demonstrating the author's unique ability to use the vernacular not only in dialogue but also in general narration. In his works, we can see how closely his style of writing is linked with our national literary tradition. In mode of expression, especially in his use of language, he has absorbed many of the good points in the traditional novel; he has, however, created a new, national form. His language is the

living language of the masses. He is no stickler for tradition but an innovator, a truly creative writer.

Since the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art,[72] our writers have studied the language of the common people and Chinese popular forms with rewardingly good results. Good novels and short stories have been written. Some writers, however, only pay attention to the use of local dialect and colloquialisms, or to the superficial reproduction of old forms. Not so Chao Shu-li, who knows the duties of a creative writer.

He seldom falls into local dialect, colloquialisms or slang, and never indulges in such forms to show off or for embellishment. He tries as much as possible to use ordinary, common words that will suit the personality, mentality and social position of each of his characters. Sometimes a simple sentence, spoken by a specific person in a specific situation, is extraordinarily effective. At the same time, he has adopted many of the new phrases which are being constantly coined in the life and struggle of the masses. His dialogues are vivid and beautiful. Words come alive when spoken by his characters; they acquire vigour and colour.

He also uses the language of the masses in narrative and descriptive passages, and this, I think, is very significant. No one will deny that the spoken language should be used in dialogue, in keeping with the characters' social position; yet when we come to descriptive passages, it looks as if the "Europeanized"

72 See footnote 6 on page 17.

language of intellectuals were often preferred to the language of the masses. In many works we find lengthy descriptions of scenery which have nothing to do with the characters and incidents described. There must be, however, an organic connection between the characters and their environment. If the environment leaves no impression on a character's mind, that is, if it has no bearing on his life, then the writer should not waste his time writing about this environment just for his own amusement. By contrast, let us see how Chao Shu-li treats environment:

> The village was rather peculiar. In the western section, the houses were two-storeyed brick buildings, but in the centre, they were only one storey high, and in the eastern part, at the foot of the hill below the Ash-tree Grove were simply cave dwellings, about thirty in number. The terrain of the village itself was fairly level, but if you looked at the line made by the roofs of the houses, you would find a distinct slope running down from west to east. (*Rhymes of Li Yu-tsai*)

Here is no description of beautiful scenery, but the slope from west to east gives us a clear picture of class differences in the countryside.

Or, let us see how the author describes Li Yu-tsai's cave:

> The cave in which Li Yu-tsai lived was rather

messy. As you entered, on the left, up against the middle of the wall stood a *kang*. At both the head and the foot of the *kang* there were about five feet to spare to the front and back walls of the cave. The space near the front wall contained the stove. An earthen water vat, a jug with salted vegetables, a pot, spoons, bowls and a couple of dishes lined the left front wall between the stove and the door. Along the rear wall was a jumble of various sized baskets containing walnuts, persimmons and other edibles, which Li Yu-tsai had received in payment for acting as crop watchman. In the left hand wall of the cave, level with the *kang* top and as long, he had scooped out an alcove sufficiently high and deep for a person to sleep. Thus, when you entered the cave and looked at the rear wall you had the impression of a preserved fruit and nut shop. As you turned your head to the left, the alcove made you think of the niches for buddhas in a temple. Another turn to the left, and you were in a small restaurant!

This is not just a description of a cave dwelling. It is the author's way of describing the hero's social position and character.

The method and language he uses to describe his characters are also unique. Instead of a direct description, he shows them up through the impression they create on other people.

This is how he describes handsome Hsiao Erh-hei:

Hsiao Erh-hei was the younger son of Kung Ming the Second. Once in resisting a Japanese "mopping-up," he had killed two enemy soldiers and had been commended for his excellent marksmanship. His good looks were known far and wide, and he turned the heads of the womenfolk in all the villages where he appeared in stage plays during the Spring Festival.

The same method is used to describe Hsiao Erh-hei's sweetheart:

Hsiao Chin had now turned eighteen. People of a flippant bent regarded Hsiao Chin far more beautiful than her mother at that age. The young villagers always looked for an opportunity to exchange a few words with her. When Hsiao Chin went to the river to wash clothes, they followed her; when she went to gather wild herbs, they all did the same.

A superb scene is the one in which Third Fairy-maid, Hsiao Chin's mother, goes to the district office.

The ten-year-old girl who had been told to play outside had soon spread the news that there was a middle-aged woman in the district government office who still put powder on her face and wore shoes with gaudy embroidery although she was more than forty-five years old. All the women in the neighbourhood left their work to

come and see such a sight till they filled up half the courtyard of the district government. They milled about, whispering to one another.

"Forty-five! She looks it!"

"Look at that pair of trousers she's wearing!"

"Look at her embroidered shoes!"

Third Fairy-maid could hear their remarks right in the district head's office. She had never blushed before, but this of all days she just couldn't control herself. Embarrassment was written all over her face, and beads of sweat came streaming down. The messenger brought Hsiao Chin and said loudly, so that everyone could hear,

"What are you people staring at? Why, isn't she also a human being? Don't tell me you haven't seen anybody like her before! Make way, please!"

The crowd of women burst out laughing.

The district head then said to Third Fairy-maid,

"Now that your daughter is here, you can ask her whether she is willing or not."

But Third Fairy-maid was distracted by the talk of the people in the courtyard, "Forty-five . . . embroidered shoes. . . ." She was so ashamed of herself that she had to wipe the sweat from her face again and again, unable to utter even a syllable. Suddenly the people in the courtyard changed the tone of their remarks.

"Yes, that's her daughter. . . . But the mother knows more about how to make herself

up. . . . She's supposed to know also how to invoke the deities. . . ."

Then someone who obviously knew all about Third Fairy-maid started relating the story about "the rice is over-cooked." By then, Third Fairy-maid wished she could kill herself by butting her head against the wall.

These quotations prove that the author always uses the language of the masses in his descriptions and that his words are full of charm. Such compelling power can be derived only from life, from the people.

Needless to say, Chao Shu-li pays great attention to language. From what we have seen of his autobiographical material, we know Chao Shu-li has persistently striven to use the language of the masses, and worked hard on his language before he wrote these three stories. He does all in his power to write so that the masses will understand him. Dissatisfied with the gulf that exists between modern Chinese literature and art and the masses, he has created his own way of writing, out of his familiarity with the life of the people. Thus, his success is no accident but due to the fact that he has put into practice the directives on literature and art given by Mao Tse-tung. Chao Shu-li deliberately calls his works "popular stories," although they are not, of course, popular stories in the ordinary sense of the word, but real works of art, in which artistry and popular appeal blend.

I must stop here. But have I nothing more to

say of Chao Shu-li's writings? Readers may object that I have mentioned only his good points and none of his shortcomings. True, I am praising rather than criticizing him. Since the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art, all branches of art have shown remarkable achievements and a new epoch has been ushered in. Of this literary harvest, the works of Chao Shu-li form an important part, marking the successful realization of Mao Tse-tung's principles on literature and art. That is why I hail and endorse his success.

1946

About the Author

Chou Yang was born in 1908 in a village in Yiyang County, Hunan Province. Having completed his secondary education in Hunan, he entered the now defunct Great China University in Shanghai in 1926 where he came into contact with Marxism.

His career as a writer began in 1930. From 1931 to 1937, he was a leading member of the China Federation of Left-Wing Writers in Shanghai. During this period, he published some works of literary criticism and translated Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* into Chinese from the English version as well as some short pieces by Soviet writers.

In 1937, at the outbreak of the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression, he left Shanghai for Yenan, the centre of the revolution, where he served, variously, as head of the Department of Education of the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Government, as President of the Lu Hsun Arts' Institute, and as President of Yenan University. Meanwhile he continued his writings of literary criticism. Most of his works of this period have been collected in *The New Age of the Masses*. He also compiled a book entitled *Marxism and Literature*, and translated into Chinese *The Aesthetic Relationships Between Art and Reality* by N. G. Chernyshevsky, the great Russian critic.

During the years 1945-49 he was, first, Vice-President of the North China Associated University and, later, head of the Propaganda Department of the North China Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, he has been Vice-Minister of Cultural Affairs and Vice-Chairman of the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists.